

# Guide-Posts to Chinese Painting

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**LOUISE WALLACE HACKNEY**

Edited by Dr. Paul Pelliot, *Collège de France*



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# GUIDE-POSTS TO CHINESE PAINTING



By

LOUISE W. HACKNEY

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GUIDE-POSTS TO CHINESE PAINTING







BIRDS AND LANDSCAPE  
Early Ming

# Guide-Posts to Chinese Painting

BY  
LOUISE WALLACE HACKNEY

EDITED BY  
DR. PAUL PELLION  
*Collège de France*

*With Illustrations*



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TO  
ADA SMALL MOORE  
WHOSE RESPONSIVE MIND  
AND  
CREATIVE SYMPATHY  
MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE



## PREFACE

THERE has been no attempt on the part of the author to enter into the many controversial aspects of Chinese art and philosophy, to decide whether this picture is genuine or only a copy, whether that religion or philosophy originated at the time and in the manner popularly ascribed to it. Many able scholars are devoting their best energies to the critical, analytical, and historical problems of Chinese art (a list of their books will be found in the bibliography), while nearly every year records some new archæological discovery that necessitates a revaluation of our knowledge from the critical and chronological angles. In all this flux one thing alone remains static and unchanged, and that is the beauty of the art itself. It is to this phase that the author has addressed herself.

The purpose of this book, in other words, is to present a composite picture of Chinese painting, as the expression of the soul of a nation, to give something of its spiritual and philosophical meanings, and to point out a few of its ideals and methods that are so universal that they can enrich the art of the West — and incidentally some of us personally. Since the painter has ever been the picturer and interpreter, not the critic of his age, only those influences and beliefs that were so common as to be reflected in his art have been mentioned.

In other words it is to the lover and appreciator, rather than to him who approaches art with his head; to all those who recognize beauty and accept Truth wherever found that this book is offered.

A personal debt must be acknowledged. The keenest pleasure in the preparation of this book has been the counsel, guidance, and criticism so generously given by Dr. Paul Pelliot, professor of the Languages, History, and Archæology of Central Asia in the Collège de France, who spent precious hours on his recent visit to America in reading and editing the manuscript (with the exception of the last two chapters, which were unfinished at the time), by Mr. A. William Bahr, who gave so freely of his years of experience and rare æsthetic insight into Chinese art, and by Dr. Berthold Laufer, whose creative interest and active assistance were invaluable in the shaping of the manuscript. Many other friends have shared generously of their expert knowledge upon certain phases of the subject, Florence Ayscough, with her stimulating interest, D. Percival Yetts, who read the proofs and advised as to the unifying of the spelling of Chinese names, C. F. Yao, Kiam Ma, Mary Ripley Weisse, and the painters who elucidated various points of Occidental art technique. The author's thanks are also due to the collectors and museums who have so generously allowed their paintings to be reproduced, and to the authors from whose work sundry quotations have been borrowed.

LOUISE WALLACE HACKNEY

NEW YORK, 1927

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GUIDE-POSTS TO CHINESE PAINTING



# Guide-Posts to Chinese Painting



## CHAPTER I

### WHY THE CHINESE PAINTER PAINTED WHAT HE DID

ALL great art is universal and appeals to that something deep within us which transcends race and time, and for the moment, at least, raises us above the limitations of our own backgrounds and traditions. It is the key which has unlocked the civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Babylonia, and is proving equally the key to the ancient yet still contemporary civilizations of Persia, India, Japan, and China.

The best art of the East and of the West are one in spite of the seeming barriers: differences in technique, in the materials employed, and even in the thought forms from which they spring. Every art is conditioned not only by the materials used, but by the purposes for which it was created and the psychological background of the nation and the period in which it develops. While the art of China is readily understandable where it touches the universal in the places where it is conditioned by its background, it is immeasurably enriched for the Western spectator by some knowledge of the influences that moulded it and caused it to take one road while the art of the West chose another.

Chinese art sprang from a historical and religious

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background quite alien to the three-pronged — Greek, Roman, and Hebrew — background of the West. The materials used were equally alien. And the technique that resulted reflected the influence of these two and became in many respects the antithesis of that of the West.

European paintings, with the exception of mural and fresco, have usually been done upon a closely woven canvas fastened upon wooden stretchers. They were usually a nearly square rectangle in shape. They were framed in gold or some contrasting color, these borders being made of wood or plaster. Such pictures were intended to hang upon the walls permanently. Chinese paintings, on the contrary, were done upon silk or porous paper, easily harmed by light, damp, or dust, and were not left hanging more than a few months at a time (sometimes for only a few hours if a masterpiece). They were mounted upon brocade, backed with paper, the scroll ending in a wooden roll with porcelain, wood, or jade knobs. When not in use, they were rolled up, tied with silk cords, fastened with jade or ivory tags, and stored in a box within a box in the strong-room of the owner. Many were never seen except upon special occasions.

These paintings were made for two distinct uses, one formal and ceremonious, the other intimate and personal.<sup>1</sup> The ones for ceremonial occasions are hung in the central or reception-hall of the house, the Ta Chung T'ang opposite the door, the Chung T'ang in pairs on the sides. The large painting, or Ta Chung T'ang, usually has two scrolls hung on either side of it, on each of which is a

<sup>1</sup> These customs vary slightly in different parts of China, but those described are the ones most generally followed.

verse or quotation from the classics, written by one of the famous calligraphers. These express 'well wishes' for the family and predict their continued wisdom, prosperity, and virtue. The subject of the central painting is governed entirely by the choice of the father or the oldest male member of the family. It is changed usually only once during the year and that on the first day; but in some vicinities the dampness of the climate causes the painting to be changed more frequently to prevent mildewing.

On certain anniversaries, however, the central painting is removed temporarily and another hung in its place. For the birthday of the father a painting of the God of Longevity is substituted; for the birthday of the mother a painting of Hsi Wang Mu, the Taoist goddess. Another occasion is on the fifth day of the fifth month when spirits are supposed to roam at large, and a picture of Chung K'uei, the demon exorciser, is hung as the central painting. According to the legend the Emperor Ming Huang dreamt one night that he saw an imp stealing the jade lute of Yang Kuei-fei. Just as he was about to run off with it, a huge figure in broken court hat and top-boots came striding in, seized the robber between thumb and finger, and swallowed him whole. When the emperor inquired who the rescuer was, the spirit answered that he was a certain Chung K'uei, who in the seventh century had failed to pass his examinations and had dashed out his brains in his disappointment on the steps of the examination hall. The emperor of his day, hearing of the tragedy, had had pity on him and had caused his body to be given court burial. In gratitude he had constituted himself the protector of all future em-

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perors against every manner of evil influences. The fifteenth day of the eighth month is given to the Moon Festival; and on this day (or rather night) a painting of the palace in the moon is hung in place of the Ta Chung T'ang. Yet again on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, on the festival of the worship of heaven and earth, a painting representing the Taoist King of Heaven and scrolls picturing the heaven and earth deities are substituted.

On the side walls of the hall two series of four paintings are hung, on one side landscapes showing the Four Seasons, on the other the flowers of the Four Seasons. Or they may be varied with four calligraphic scrolls of proverbs or maxims and quotations from the classics.

The paintings in the women's reception-room follow the same arrangement as those in the central hall, except that they are not changed on the anniversaries or festivals.

The private inner rooms of the house are not bound by such formal regulations, and the pictures chosen are governed only by the taste of the occupant. They may be the *Li Chou*, smaller-sized paintings than any of the preceding, or the small pictures in sets of four known as the *P'ing T'iao*, or the exceedingly popular horizontal pictures, the *Hêng P'i*.

All such hanging paintings are usually called, in English, wall scrolls or kakemonos, a term we have borrowed from the Japanese.

The most intimate forms of paintings are those called 'album paintings,' *Ts'ê Yeh*, and the hand-scrolls (makemonos), *Shou Chiüan*. The albums are made of long strips of paper folded into a book, and contain ex-

quisite small paintings (frequently originally intended for use on fans), collected by some connoisseur. They deal with all subjects: the lives of the emperors and empresses, famous men and virtuous women, historical scenes, Buddhist and Taoist subjects, landscapes — any subject in fact that interested the compiler — and often bear the names of the greatest artists of China.

The hand-scrolls, or *Shou Chüan*, are the most intimate of all Chinese paintings. They are intended to speak directly from the soul of the artist to the soul of the beholder and reveal themselves most fully when looked at in the quiet intimacy of the study or the inner room. They are usually not more than two feet wide, though they may be of almost any length, even up to fifty feet, and are so mounted that the onlooker rolls them from right to left — somewhat in the manner that Greek and Roman manuscripts were unrolled. Only a portion of the painting is revealed at a time. The spectator unrolls the scroll with one hand, while with the other he rolls up the part already seen, pausing at will to observe its beauties. So harmonious is the composition of the great scrolls that no matter where he may pause, the picture before him is complete. No other artists have ever achieved such a masterful control of balance and rhythm of line. These paintings are regarded by the Chinese as a means of awakening the deep inner spirit, that mood which music alone releases for us in the West.

But to return to the materials used and the way they condition the technique of the painter. In the West the canvas on which the painter worked was given a preparatory coating to make its fibers impervious to the pigments of the paint. They remained in layers on this sur-

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face and could easily be removed if desired, or painted over. This treatment enabled the painter to use over and over again the same surface. There are, indeed, stories of great painters choosing such old canvases from preference for their work, claiming that they gave depth to their colors; and more than once a restorer has found a painting beneath the one he was cleaning. This hard-surfaced canvas also allowed the painter to work as slowly as he chose, painting out again any detail that did not suit him. He could change the line of a mouth again and again until its expression was exactly the one he wanted. Much the same conditions applied in his use of tempera.

The Chinese painter, on the contrary, used silk or a porous paper on which every brush-stroke showed. A brush-mark once made had to remain for the life of the painting; there was no way of obliterating it. This necessitated an entirely different method of approach from the one employed by the Western painter. The Chinese artist had to have a complete conception, to the minutest detail, of what he wanted to do before putting brush to silk. He had to 'sketch it out with his brain' beforehand, as an ancient Chinese painter once tersely phrased it. He had to have a sure hand and a memory trained to the highest point. To attain this latter, he studied his subjects day after day, memorizing them to their smallest detail, literally making a thousand mental drawings of them, before he began his picture.

Two stories told of Wu Tao-tzü, the greatest of Chinese painters, illustrate vividly the method of the Chinese artist. It is recounted of him that when he painted a portrait of the famous General Li, he had the

general dance a sword-dance before him, and made his portrait a composite of the impressions he received of him in the feat. The other story illustrates still more fully this method of 'memory sketching.' About 750 A.D. the powerful Emperor Ming Huang sent Wu Tao-tzŭ to paint the scenery of Chia-ling in Ssŭch'uan, of which he was very fond. When Wu Tao-tzŭ returned many months later, he did not have even one painting to show for his journey. The emperor was very angry, but Wu Tao-tzŭ responded to his reproaches:

'I have it all here in my heart.'

Whereupon he retired to a hall in the palace, and in one day threw off 'a hundred miles of painting' (to quote the flowery and exaggerated Chinese version of the affair). He probably, however, produced a large number of landscapes for the emperor solely from memory.

Memory has a way of sloughing off immaterial details, and the work of the Chinese artist gained immensely from this simplification.

There were many other tenets of his art, diametrically opposed to Western ideals. With us the more 'like' a thing is to its subject, the more we admire it. We commend Velásquez for his lace, and other painters for their silks and satins, still others for the texture of their flesh. The Chinese artist made no attempt to produce such a literal likeness — that work he left to the craftsman. His purpose was to present the reality as distinguished from the actuality of the subject. He set himself to show 'the life-movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things,' to quote Hsieh Ho, the great artist and critic of the sixth century; the creative essence, not the thing itself; the soul and not the outward form.

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He did not use light and shadow as the Western artist employed it, but suggested the fundamentals of form by the sweep of an unbroken line. Knowing that each stroke of his brush left an indelible impression, he made that stroke give a definite result in line: sharp and concise, broad and quivering, light or dark, as the exigencies of his subject required. The ink spread with the strong strokes or thinned to delicate shades at his pleasure. He was able to change, without breaking the line, from a solid mass to a hair line, from a rough-edged stroke to a smooth, sleek one. His lines have had a flow, a rhythm such as Western artists have never attained. One advantage he had, that should not be overlooked in marveling at his mastery of line, is that a part, at least, of the flexibility of his wrist was due to his using a brush for writing as well as for painting. His wrist muscles were never hardened, as those of the Occidental artist's have been by the use of the quill or steel pen. His training began when as a child he learned to form his first written character.

The training in the mechanics of painting was long and arduous. The artist studied blades of grass for the straight line, the bamboo for the curved, and the prunus for a combination of the two. Then he progressed to flowers, to figures, and to landscapes. In all his work he strove for four things: *ch'i*, atmosphere; *yün*, harmony; *sun*, likeness; *t'ung*, method. He made numerous copies of the great masterpieces, striving thus to understand something of the skill of their creators. In making these copies he followed a set procedure. The masterpiece to be reproduced was rolled so as to show only a few inches at the top or bottom; then the scroll on which it was to

be copied was rolled in a similar manner. Little by little the artist copied in the details of the original. But even with such a painstaking method, it must not be supposed that his were servile, mechanical copies; he employed much thought, intelligence, and skill upon them. Many of the greatest artists continued to make copies of the work of their predecessors after they had themselves become famous. Li Lung-mien is said to have been in the habit of copying any great painting which he fancied and could not buy for his own collection. These copies of his have been almost as much treasured by the connoisseur and collector as have his originals. Such copies, however, were never mere servile imitations, but free and profound re-creations, and reflected the genius of the hand that transcribed them. It was not until a painter had saturated himself in this manner with the technique of the great masters, and had gained such a complete mastery of his brush that it would respond freely to the command of his well-filled mind (a painter was expected to be primarily a man of culture, thoroughly conversant with the history and traditions of his country, and well versed in its literature, especially its poetry) that he considered himself sufficiently equipped to follow his own bent and create independently.

Painting in China has been in its main tradition an art of line. This reliance on line to gain their effects has caused many Western critics and artists to look upon the work of the Chinese as inferior to and more primitive than ours. This is a mistake. Both are equally sophisticated; it is only that the conventions of the two have expressed themselves differently. We have made our painting a kind of colored sculpture in our attempts to

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present objects in the round and communicate the emotions that ordered space and perspective arouse. The Chinese, on the contrary, have used line as their medium of expression, and with mere contour have produced the illusion of perfect modeling.

The two ways in which they used line should not be confused. One, the *pai miao hua*, has the characteristics of the mere outline sketch and makes no attempt to introduce varying tones of ink for the sake of effect. The other is a highly sophisticated and conventionalized use: that the line which binds things shall be visible. (A similar convention has been used by Western artists at various times.) Within these lines a flat wash of color was placed. The mixing of colors was avoided so far as possible, as the purpose was not to blend colors as in Western art, but to distinguish them.

Such a use of color with line seems to have been the vogue in China up to the T'ang Dynasty when ink-paintings or monochromes became the study of the artist. The Chinese consider that their art reached its zenith in this ink-painting. All the great painters were adepts at it. Chang Yen-yüan, the famous art critic, went so far as to claim that 'by the skillful manipulation of the ink, the five colors of the Chinese palette (red, blue, yellow, white, and black) came out of themselves.' Certain it is that in their great landscapes in monochrome, one feels no lack of color. This ink-painting attained its highest development during the Sung Dynasty. It never superseded color-painting, however, but developed coequally with it. A painter often practiced both styles, and many of the great masters were equally proficient in either.

This reliance on line affected the technique of the



BREAKING WAVES AND AUTUMN WINDS

Attributed to Tai Chin of Ming



Chinese painter profoundly. It gave to his work a rhythm such as no other art has produced. It forced him to seek the essential character and genius of his subject. When he portrayed water, his line had to catch weight and mass, the lightness of foam bursting on a rock, the sweep of a curling wave. When he pictured a sage meditating in his mountain retreat, every line of his face and form, his drapery, and even those of the rocks and trees about him, were used to create the mood of meditation. In the same manner, he portrayed the bird on the wing, flowers swaying in the breeze, and the free and untrammeled life of animals. His preoccupation was always with the motion and inherent life of animal and plant, and he displayed a power in their presentation that no Western artist has yet approached. To achieve his effects by means of line, he ignored many objects which the Western artist thinks essential in his backgrounds, and used space to emphasize his subject. But it is not empty space; the imagination of the onlooker unconsciously supplies the details and has his thoughts drawn away from the concrete to the universal.

No art has ever been more conscious of its ends than that of China; and nowhere have the technique and æsthetic doctrines of the painter been more accurately formulated — not only by the critic, but — what is very rare in the West — by the practitioner himself. Among the innumerable comments, those of the art critic and figure-painter, Hsieh Ho, of the sixth century, have become classic and have received universal acceptance, expressing as they do the deeply rooted instincts of the race. These Six Canons or Necessities have not only been the subject of much controversy in China, but have

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aroused an almost equal storm among Western translators, since it is almost impossible to find satisfactory English or French equivalents for the Chinese terms. A point that seems to have been usually overlooked in the discussion of them is that Hsieh Ho himself was a figure-painter and that his Canons were formulated before landscape-painting became a great art in China; and that, as a consequence, his words have to do more with figure- than with landscape-painting to which many critics have attempted to apply them literally.

### The Six Canons:

The first Canon has been variously translated as 'the life rhythm of things,' 'spirit harmony,' and 'vitality of conception combined with strength.'

The second Canon has been translated as 'organic structure,' 'the use of the brush in outline drawing,' and as 'the pictorial conception is the incarnation of the spirit that created it.' It governs the use of the brush in the drawing of the outline (bones) of the subject.

The third as 'conformity to nature,' 'according to the object is its shape depicted.'

The fourth as 'appropriate coloring'; in other words, the color must be true to the object.

The fifth as 'arrangement,' or 'planning and disposing degrees and places.' (Perspective.)

The sixth as 'transition of the classic school,' the copying of masterpieces and the portraying of classic subjects in the traditional manner.

The first Canon is the one most in dispute. Arthur Waley in analyzing the Canons throws an illuminating light upon the subject when he calls attention to the fact that 'spirit' as here used is something objective, outside

the artist, but that with the spread of Zen Buddhism, which regarded the Ideal as something to be sought by each man within his own nature, the first Canon received a new interpretation. Sung writers, such as Kuo Hsi and his son Kuo Ssü, speak of the 'spirit' as operating from within, as a quality of the artist himself. Paul Pelliot, while agreeing with Waley, still further elucidates the Canon by saying that a man who paints must be in agreement with the harmony that gives life to the Universe.

It was just this realization of something greater than technique, valuable as technique is, that kept Chinese art from stultifying itself in its great period.

The fine balance that must be maintained between the two has always been the problem facing artists of all nations. Ching Hao attempted over a thousand years ago to define just what this relationship should be. He said:

'Painting is delineation: to measure the shapes of things, yet with the grasp of Truth; to express outward form as outward form and inner reality as inner reality. Outward forms must not be taken as inner realities. If this is not understood, resemblance may indeed be achieved, but not pictorial Truth; resemblance reproduces form, but neglects spirit: but Truth shows spirit and substance in a like perfection.'

But overemphasis on 'spirit' often led, in Chinese as in our Western art, to the formation of art movements which taught that technique hampered the free expression of the artist. Such rebels against tradition were many, but invariably as the years passed the 'new' movement was absorbed back into the main stream of art, for the great artist the world over has always even-

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tually realized that genuine originality, as distinguished from mere snobbish eccentricity, must build from tradition, since tradition is the supreme, condensed originality of the nation from which they spring. This does not mean that the artist must accept it blindly and *in toto*. On the contrary, the great artist accepts this part, rejects that, and modifies yet another. Only in this way is the main stream of a nation's art revivified. Tao-chi, a painter of the early seventeenth century, aptly summarized the painter's position: 'Once my motto was *my own way*. But now I realize that after all there is only one way and that which I discovered for myself and called my own way was really the way of the ancients.'

Chinese painters also differ profoundly from their brethren in the West in the social background from which they usually spring. We begin with a technical background; they, with a cultural. Among us culture has been sought as a valuable addition to the working equipment of an artist who has demonstrated his technical skill, not as the foundation upon which to erect the edifice. With the Chinese, on the contrary, the technique of the painter was learned by those who had already given promise of extraordinary ability while undergoing the usual cultural training of a Chinese gentleman. Their great artists, with a few exceptions, were all men of culture. An emperor and numerous princes of the reigning dynasties were numbered among them. It was no unusual thing for a great painter to be a great poet, and even a proficient musician as well, for the three arts in China seem to fuse one into the other. As they were drawn largely from the literati, the class that governed the country, many artists spent the

greater part of their lives in official positions. Wang Wei and Li Lung-mien are two outstanding examples both of artistic versatility and executive ability. The only painters in the West who have been gifted so diversely were Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. The Chinese artist, as collector, philosopher, critic, and theorist, had a rich storehouse of experience to draw from; and the depth of his art may be attributed to the richness of his mind, for as the old Chinese saying has it: 'The hand cannot execute what the mind has not experienced.' In the reverse as one of their critics warns: 'If a man possess genius, but is ignorant of technique, although things may shape themselves in his mind, they will not take shape from his brush.' These artist-scholars made profound studies of their art and wrote numerous treatises and æsthetic discussions upon it.

Another fundamental difference between Chinese art and the art of the West is that in one the artist expressed an individual viewpoint, and in the other a racial. The subjects chosen by the Chinese artist were largely conditioned by tradition, and colored by the three so-called religions of China. Twice in the Western world has the artist been so limited in his choice of themes: once in that Golden Age of Art when Raphael, Michelangelo, and da Vinci were expressing on canvas or in stone the religious aspirations of their people, and, under priestly patronage, decorating the churches; and again in Greece when the dramatists and sculptors were retelling the great epics of their nation.

This limiting of the choice of subject had certain advantages that far outweighed its disadvantages. It freed

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the artist from the burden of having to choose from the vast and bewildering spectacle of the world, and allowed him to concentrate his powers. It freed him from the necessity of traveling to Holland and Spain, to the South Seas and the North Pole, as so many of our modern artists feel they must do, to get new local color to whet the jaded interest of the public. Such subjects as the 'Evening Bell from a Distant Temple,' the 'Sunset Glow over a Fishing Village,' 'Fine Weather after a Storm in a Lonely Mountain Village,' 'Wild Geese Alighting on a Sandy Beach,' 'Snow on the Hills,' 'The Flowers of the Four Seasons,' the 'Four Accomplishments,' 'Sages in the Hills,' are conspicuous examples of the thousands of traditional subjects the Chinese painter found ready to his brush. The very fact that the famous masters had already handled these themes in their own way, was but an added inspiration to the artist to make a subject his own, and pour into it his inmost being and evolve from it a new conception. He tested his originality far more severely in this way than if he had set out to create a novelty, relying on eccentricity of thought, trick of technique, or bizarreness of subject to attract. The portrayal of a traditional subject, while it left the artist free to put his own interpretation upon it, still linked him with the common life of his countrymen, and he could count upon a thousand associations, indefinable emotions and sympathies to flow from the onlooker to the painting. It gave his art roots that reached deep into the imagination of his people — into the sub-conscious as we say to-day — and set him at once in tune with the minds and emotions of his public. It gave even to his landscapes a cohesion, a solidarity and a human interest

that raised them from the trivial and shallow — the fault of so many of our Western landscapes — into the universal. Nor did this circumscribing by tradition, at least during the time Chinese art was vigorous, prove at all deadening or paralyzing. It is interesting to note that in the three greatest periods of artistic development the world has known, the Greek, the Italian, and the Chinese, it was the traditional subject, illumined by the genius of the master that produced the great works of art, not, as in the lesser periods, the individual, personal caprice of the artist, expressing his own fluctuating moods. Even the artist of lesser talent in China was not unduly hampered, for he did better work supported by tradition than he could have done without it. He had at least a minimum of high conception and able workmanship to live up to.

The Chinese painter never scorned to tell a story in his pictures; in fact he could not conceive of one without some message or subtle inner meaning — or, to put it more baldly, without some narrative or didactic content. But his was an art that could tell a story or point a moral without for an instant sacrificing its plasticity. He harmonized the two so completely that one merged imperceptibly into the other. The only time that the West has approximated this bold fusion of the two arts was in the fourteenth-century Italian frescoes; but the fusion was not as successful as that of the Chinese. The Italians had to reveal their stories in separate fragments, while the Chinese artist was able to unfold his on hand-scrolls that afforded a panorama of continued narrative and sustained plasticity. In them form and substance became inseparable.

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The Chinese used a definite symbolism to convey that inner meaning which mere form cannot give. Symbolism in its larger sense has always been an important factor in the art of all nations, it is true — Michelangelo and Rembrandt were particularly adept in its use. It is the means the artist uses to convey to the educated spectator a sense of things beyond the mere matter of the picture. The knowledge that they could rely on the fertile embroidery of reminiscence, and could tap the great storehouse of historical, mythical, and literary association in the minds of their onlookers, gave the Chinese painters, even in their landscapes, a freedom in treatment that the Western painter has not known since he ceased to paint religious and classical subjects. The modern Western painter can expect nothing from his audience. As one European critic recently complained, the spectator is too indifferent or too stupid to understand without a complete explanation being presented to him. The Chinese painter has but to suggest, and the imagination of the beholder richly embroiders his suggestion. Furthermore, our emphasis on literalness has deprived the Western painter of a certain freedom in design; our insistence on realism, of almost all freedom in inventing arrangements of color. It has prevented him also from suggesting the quick motion, and through it the vitality, that the more fluid Chinese method permits.

The many subjects treated by the Chinese artist fall into the following groups: Buddhist and Taoist scenes and deities; human figures; palaces and houses (studies in architecture); the life of the barbarian tribes that surrounded China; dragons and fishes; animals; birds, insects, and flowers, together with bamboo and other trees; and landscapes.

To sum up the differences between the art of the East and the West: the Chinese artist was not preoccupied with details of form and the scientific knowledge of material things, the muscular system of the body, its anatomical structure, the play of light and shade — subjects of so much importance to the Western artist. He was absorbed rather in embodying the creative essence, the soul and not the form, linking it up with the continuity of the universe and the universality of life. Laurence Binyon likens Western art to dramatic poetry with all its rich complexities, and Eastern to lyric, with its intense simplicity and purity. One is quite as mature as the other, each having a definite place in the great realm of art. The difference might be still further defined as that of the West being concerned with the *aspect* of things, while that of the Chinese, with their *vitality*.

In design, color, flow of line, vitality, and economy of means, Chinese art excels all others.

## CHAPTER II SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF CHINESE ART

THE backgrounds from which the art of the East and of the West spring differ widely, though behind both, like the warp in the textile, is the universal, the human, making them understandable, one by the other. Each thinks in terms of its own race: its own civilization, its own philosophical, religious and social organization, and its own historical past. The cultures resulting must of necessity be alien. Our American culture, colored by its English background, is founded on Roman law, Greek art and philosophy, and the Hebrew religion — all influences imposed upon us from without and which have been more or less successfully merged with our original Teutonic culture. The Chinese, on the contrary, is founded on a native law, philosophy, religion and art, all indigenous to the soil, except for the superstructure of Buddhism with its slight Hellenistic influence.

It is almost impossible to sum up in a few short sentences the opposing viewpoints of these two cultures. Okakura Kakuzo in his 'Ideals of the East' very nearly succeeds in so epitomizing it when he speaks of 'that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal which is the common thought inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic,

who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life.'

The secular and religious art of China is the out-growth — as is every other art in the world — of the social and religious conditions from which it sprang. In considering these influences, it would be profitless to discuss them either from an evolutionary or critical basis. What concerns us is how they modified and stimulated the art of China and influenced the artist, who mirrored and interpreted the ideals of his age.

The Chinese are the most catholic nation in the world in regard to religion. As a Chinese gentleman once said to the writer, 'A Chinese is born a Taoist, lives a Confucian, and dies a Buddhist.' Such persecutions as have occurred in China were not religious persecution in the sense that the word is used in the West. China has never known an inquisition, bloody trials for heresy, nor religious wars. The teachings of Buddhism were suppressed at various times, to be sure, not for their ethical teachings, but for political reasons. They advocated celibacy and the monastic life, a teaching that was in direct opposition to family unity, the principle on which not only family life but the state itself was founded. According to the Chinese idea the state is but a larger conception of family life, and the continuity of the clan and the family the one essential thing to which every other must be subordinated. This conception of family unity reaches back into prehistoric times, and finds its daily outward expression in ancestor worship and acts of filial piety. It is the rock upon which Chinese civilization is built. These persecutions were directed against temples and monastic orders rather

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than against individuals. The latter were allowed to go their own way when their monasteries were closed. Even in the Boxer Rebellion of our own era, the missionaries who were killed were killed as foreigners and not as Christians.

It has not yet been definitely determined what the early primitive religion of China was. Paul Pelliot and certain other scholars maintain that the Chinese originally worshiped many gods and that traces of this early and 'popular' form of religion are to be found on the Chou bronzes, in the jade carvings, in certain of the stone statues and engravings in the recently excavated stone-chambers and, even as late as the T'ang, in some of the clay tomb figures whose symbolism is still unexplained. Others, including many of the Chinese scholars themselves, follow the view of James Legge, the pioneer in the study of Chinese religions, that the primitive religion of China, at least as far as recorded in the written word, was monotheistic. He says that they had a supreme being, Shang Ti, who meant to the early Chinese exactly what God did to our forefathers. He was the supreme object of worship and homage; but this homage was paid to him, not by the individual devotee, but by the ruler of the state, who was the sole officiator. Mankind in the mass, not as the individual, was the care of Shang Ti. He appointed grain for their nourishment and watched over their welfare; he charged himself especially with the conduct of the ruler, whom he exalted to his high position and maintained there only so long as the people enjoyed general prosperity and abundance. When the ruler became impious or neglected his duties, he was punished by having his throne taken from him by

very human means, the rebellion of his people. These rebellions, if successful, were looked upon as being expressions of the withdrawal of the favor of Shang Ti from the former ruler, and its bestowal on the new and successful man thus elevated to his place. China, for all its adherence to family and tradition, has never suffered under the burden of the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Evil conditions in the state were blamed upon the emperor personally; and twice a year — until the overthrow of the Manchus and the substitution of a republic — at the winter and summer solstice, he sought the Altar of Heaven and there rendered an account of his stewardship.

The offerings used at these ceremonies were not sacrifices in our common acceptation of the word. They held no idea of expiation or propitiation, no sense of guilt, no element of dependence. They were tributes of duty and gratitude, accompanied with petitions and thanksgiving. The early concepts of the Chinese show none of the fear of the supreme being so common to the mythologies of other races. The Egyptians died still dominated by their sacrifice-demanding gods; the Greeks and Romans had to somewhat transmute theirs into beneficent beings before they make their real contributions to the thought of the world. This ancient worship of Shang Ti has come down to the present practically unchanged, nor has it ever been superseded by Buddhism or Taoism. The Chinese have never made an image or painting of this supreme being; the supreme deity of the Taoist paradise is sometimes described as the 'God of Heaven' but is an entirely different divinity.

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Such a worship must of necessity be too impersonal to satisfy the longings of the finite human heart, and the Chinese reverenced, in addition to Shang Ti, a number of minor and inferior spirits, which were closely connected with objects of nature. These were looked upon as performing services for mankind in behalf of Shang Ti, acting as his agents as it were. A quotation from the statutes of the Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, though enacted at a comparatively recent date, gives an accurate idea of the manner in which they were regarded by the Chinese. These prayers were to the heavenly spirits: the spirits of the Cloud-Master, the Rain-Master, the Lord of the Winds, and the Thunder-Master. ‘It is your office, O spirits, to superintend the clouds and rain, and to raise and send abroad the winds, as ministers assisting Shang Ti.’ It was thus ‘the people enjoy your meritorious service.’

While the worship performed at the Altar of Heaven was to Shang Ti alone, the ancestors of the emperor performing it, and of those of the preceding dynasties, were supposed to be present in spirit; not to receive homage but as carrying out the Chinese idea of the solidarity of the family. Thus the worship of Shang Ti and ancestor worship were linked up in a close relationship that stretched back into prehistoric times.

The ceremonies of ancestor worship might be called great family reunions where the dead and the living meet, eating and drinking together, the living paying homage to the dead, and the dead blessing the living. (The cult of ancestor worship has been common to many lands, though frequently disguised as ‘reverence for the past.’) So strong a hold has it had on the

Chinese that even to-day it is the only form of 'atheism' that cannot be forgiven. It finds material expression in the wooden tablets on which the name and office of the departed is written, and in ancestral portraits. While the ceremonies are being performed, the spirit especially interested in them is supposed to occupy the tablet; but at the end of the rites this spirit departs and the tablet is no longer regarded as being supernatural. In the ordinary family the tablets and paintings of the three preceding generations only are kept in the house of the senior member. The still older ones are stored; and it is only when a family dies out or is dispersed through a civil war or some other disaster, that ancestral paintings are ever offered for sale, and then only to foreigners.

From these rites of ancestor worship (a renewed authority was given them by the teachings of Confucius) arose what has been called canonization or posthumous ennobling of the dead by the emperor. This is in no sense a religious ceremony. The people selected for canonization were heroes, celebrities, or benefactors of the human race such as Fu Hsi, Shên Nung, Huang Ti, Yao and Shun, and Yü the Great — men deemed worthy of special distinction by some subsequent generation. They are somewhat analogous to the saints of the Catholic Church. Early writers on China, being bred in the traditions of Greek and Roman mythology, mistook them for deities of the Greek and Roman type, and have unwittingly done a great injustice to Chinese civilization and modes of thought.

The three so-called religions of China may be regarded as schools of thought rather than as religions in our Western sense of the word; they may be looked upon

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even as different moods of the Chinese mind, manifesting themselves in the same individual at different times and on different occasions. Soothill emphasizes the relation still further; he says they may be considered simply as three aspects of the established religion of the country. Each of them became dominant for a time and enjoyed a period of power, imperial recognition, and favor. Confucianism, however, is generally considered to have been the official state religion.

Confucianism has been defined as a philosophy or system of ethics, rather than a religion in the Buddhist or Taoist sense. It is a purely human doctrine without a priesthood, and makes no supernatural claims as to origin, nor does it stress the metaphysical. It stands for morals, both private and public, and its teachings form the basis of Chinese social and political life. It was built upon an already established order. Confucius describes himself as 'a transmitter, not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients'; what he did was to take the rites and beliefs of the past and restate them. He accepted every detail of the old domestic religion of ancestor worship and that of the Supreme Ruler, Shang Ti, by the emperor and incorporated them in his teachings. He made filial piety the basis of society, teaching that one owes veneration to the dead and kindness and courtesy to the living.

Confucian teachings are based on three books: The 'Analects,' a book compiled after his death, containing his sayings or dialogues; the 'Great Learning,' the text of which is supposed to have been composed by one of his disciples to show the aim and methods of education; and the 'Doctrine of the Mean,' being the teachings of

Confucius as to the golden mean of character and conduct, and which is said to have been committed to writing by one of his grandsons. None of these have survived in their entirety owing to the destructive order of the Emperor Shih Huang of the Ch'in (or T'sin) Dynasty, but were reconstructed from fragments saved at the risk of their lives by devoted literati. This philosophy has been reconstructed and interpreted by succeeding generations of scholars until it has developed into what may be called a great secular religion. It teaches the value of a calm, measured spirit, just, kindly, good-natured, eminently sensible and self-controlled, deferential to constituted authority; it inculcates reverence for manliness, yet eschews violence and all outbursts of temper, and implants a hatred of war — though if this be inevitable, it is to be met with courage, avoiding mean spite and unfair advantages. It teaches that you should love those who do good to you, be just even to those that do evil, and should not do unto others what you do not wish them to do unto you. It stresses the Five Human Relations, those between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger, husband and wife, friend and friend; the Five Fundamental Virtues, kindness, justice, reverence, wisdom and good faith. It stresses also the need of being 'magnanimous yet inspiring respect, gentle yet firm, honestly outspoken yet respectful, commanding yet respectful, pacific yet bold, straightforward yet agreeable, generous yet discriminating, resolute yet guarded, valiant yet just.'

These doctrines were modified, amplified, added to, and interpreted by succeeding generations of Confucian scholars, the greatest of whom was Mencius (Mêng Tzü).

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It seems almost incredible that one fourth of the human race should have accepted such impersonal teachings, making no mystical appeal, recognizing no rewards or punishments other than those which a man finds in his own heart. No other philosophy and system of ethics has ever been so vital and enduring a motivating force in the lives of mankind, nor has one been for so many centuries the basis of a great political system.

Unlike Buddha or Lao Tzü, Confucius is a completely historical character about whose life a great deal is known, and with whom legend and myth have had less to do than with most of the great religious teachers. He was born about 551 b.c. His clan name was K'ung and Confucius is merely the Latinized form of K'ung Fu Tzü, 'Philosopher K'ung.' He began his labors as a teacher at twenty-two, according to Chinese historians, and continued them with varying success until his death in 479. His first official recognition did not come until three hundred years later when Kao Tsu, the first Han emperor, visited his tomb and offered sacrifices. Succeeding emperors have given him various ennobling titles such as the 'sage of antiquity' and the 'Duke Yen Shêng,' the one hereditary title of nobility in China that descends from father to son in an unbroken line.

Confucianism has always intimately allied itself with the state, and dealt with the duty of man in his capacity of citizen and subject of that state. In time it came to regard itself as *chêng chiao* or *chêng tao*, the correct, proper and orthodox teaching of the nation in its co-operative capacity. Its greatest appeal has always been to the official classes as they were drawn from the literati.

Its political teachings became definitely codified during the Sung Dynasty, and have maintained their prominence even to the present time.

Confucianism has always been opposed to the making of images, but under the influence of Buddhism, images were made not only of the great men of the past but even of Confucius himself. The Confucians, nevertheless, have managed to keep their temples on the whole free from them, and the stricter adherents of his teachings have, from time to time, succeeded in discouraging their use altogether.

The deficiencies of the Confucian doctrines, which made little provision beyond a calm stoicism for the spiritual longings of human nature, were supplied by Taoism and Buddhism.

Taoism may be said to have taken two forms, the earlier and pure teachings of Lao Tzū, and the later and more debased form which we generally associate with the word Taoism. This latter seems rather closely allied to nature worship and has drawn to it all the superstitions native to the Chinese mind. It interchanged so freely with Buddhism, gods, rituals, beliefs and symbols, that it is frequently difficult to tell which originally belonged to which.

Lao Tzū stands alone. His personal life left no outward mark, though tradition has supplied him with both a birthplace in the present An-hui and a date half a century earlier than Confucius. His name is probably a term of respect equivalent to the 'old and venerable philosopher,' though the characters are equally translatable as the 'old boy,' and there is a popular legend that he was so called because he was carried in his

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mother's womb for over seventy years. Tradition also describes a meeting between him and Confucius in b.c. 517 in which the Sage asked him many questions. Upon the overthrow of the king of his day, he is said to have disappeared, leaving behind him a book of five thousand characters. But in reality birth, name, official functions in the archives of Chou, his withdrawal because of the corruption he could not stem, the questionable interview with Confucius, the equally doubtful journey to the west, and his death at an unknown time and place, are all merely legend. Even the very book the *Tao Tê Ching* or 'Classic of the Way' (of law, reason, and rightness) which is alleged to contain his teachings is undoubtedly of later origin. It is evidently founded on some very ancient lore, and probably had its roots in the *Shih* and *Shu* (Book of Odes and Book of History) unfolding their intuitive simplicity and first-hand contact with nature. The *Tao Tê Ching* is the prophet's cry for man to begin again with the first steps of civilization when he had everything to learn, and was supposedly innocent and unspoiled. It is a book of wonderful ethical and spiritual simplicity, and deals neither in speculative cosmogony nor in popular superstitions. It has been universal in its appeal to the heart and is fast finding a place in Western metaphysical literature.

There have been many attempts to translate these illusive teachings into Western thought. Legge describes the Way (the *Tao*) as a style of action, action preceding from a mind in a state of calm repose according to the spontaneity of its nature, without bias or hypocrisy, a method of living which men should follow as the highest and purest development of their natures.

Soothill sums up in still greater detail its metaphysical side:

'While *Tao* considered as immutable or eternal has no name, when it produced order or phenomena, it became nameable. In its nature it is calm void, solitary and unchanging, in operation it revolves through the universe of being, acting everywhere, but acting mysteriously, spontaneously and without effort. It is the primal cause of the universe and is the model or rule for all creatures, especially man. It represents the ideal state of pristine perfection in which all things acted harmoniously and spontaneously, and when good and evil were unknown. Return to this state is the ideal of Lao Tzü. The virtuous man seeks to conform to *Tao* without striving. Like water he humbly seeks the lowest level yet like water, the softest thing in the world that can dissolve the hardest. *Tao* is opposed to strife and has a doctrine of non-interference or quietism. . . . To sum up, Lao Tzü represents an impersonal *Tao*, an impersonal principle or power, which viewed in the absolute sense is inscrutable, indefinable and impossible to name. It is the source and supply of all things. Calmly, without effort, and unceasingly it works for good, and man by yielding himself to it, unresistingly, unstriving, may reach his highest well-being.'

Upon these pure teachings of Lao Tzü were engrafted a host of superstitions, and he even became the chief god of this corrupted version of his teachings. No charge of wizardry or magic can be laid to him; but a host of bizarre tales sprang up about his disciples — such as their going through solid rock, leaping from precipices unhurt, walking through fire, and traveling

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miraculously through the air for thousands of miles. His later disciples also spent much of their time in searching for the elixir of immortality.

This debased form of Taoism developed three chief deities, after the manner of the Buddhist Trinity, known as the 'Trinity of the Three Pure Ones.' It consisted of Lao Tzü, P'an Ku (Chaos) and Yü Huang Shang (often confused with the monotheistic Shang Ti). It borrowed freely from Buddhism: not only its gods and symbols, but even some of its theology, such as its doctrine of a purgatory in which souls were punished before their transmigration.

Yet in spite of this perversion of the pure teachings of Lao Tzü, or perhaps because of the very colorful and human superstitions that adhered to it like barnacles to a ship, Taoism has been of great service to Chinese art. It has contributed romance, an eternal youthful joyousness, a sense of oneness with Nature — all of which have influenced deeply the great master-painters and motivated many of their greatest works.

The entrance of Buddhism into China had a vitalizing effect upon the social and artistic life as well as upon the religious. The exact date when the teachings of Buddha were first brought to China is difficult to ascertain. There had been more or less constant intercourse between China and India from before the dawn of history; and it is probable that Buddhistic influences began to be felt long before the date usually ascribed to the official arrival of Buddhism in A.D. 65. Eighteen Buddhist missionaries are alleged to have come to China in the third century B.C. and to have been imprisoned by the emperor of the day, though there are no texts to

authenticate the story. Nor is the so-called official entrance in A.D. 65 better authenticated. It is said to be based on a legend started by certain Buddhist priests of the second century in order to give special authority to their temple over others in the vicinity.

Buddhism, when it did arrive in China, found a fully developed civilization, both social and artistic, of purely native growth; and all it did was to infuse this with devotional fervor and a new energy and imagery. Not even in the 'Dark Ages' which followed very shortly, when the 'barbarians were ravishing the country,' did its influence entirely cease, for these invaders were Buddhists and not of an alien faith, and brought with them the same inheritance of Indian thought.

Buddha — the Chinese form of Sakyamuni being Shih-chia-mu-ni — was born in India about 543 B.C. and was a contemporary of Confucius and Lao Tzū. This middle section of the first millennium before Christ produced a wealth of great spiritual teachers: in China, Confucius, Lao Tzū, Mēng Tzū (Mencius), Chuang Tzū, and other philosophers; in India, Buddha (the One Who Knows, the Enlightened, the Sage); in Persia, Zoroaster; in Greece, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and others; in Judea, Ezra, Isaiah, and the other Jewish prophets. Of all these Buddha has had the greatest and most widespread influence. He has affected untold millions in the East, and in the West Gnosticism is thought by some scholars to owe something to Buddhism.

A multitude of legends surround his conception, his birth, later life and death. His conception is said to have been a miraculous one without a father; he is said

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to have entered his mother's side in the form of a white elephant. Angels and archangels are alleged to have attended his birth, and the forces of nature to have bowed in homage. In childhood he displayed a knowledge far beyond his years. When he attained manhood — the accredited son of a minor Indian king — he married and had a boy of his own. But he never ceased to brood on the causes of unhappiness. Finally after having pondered upon the mystery of misery as seen by him in a man writhing in pain, and a corpse on its way to burial, and comparing the two with the serenity of a hermit he chanced to meet, he stole away from his family by night and set forth to learn the 'whys' of life, penniless and alone. He consulted many holy men but they could give him no answer. At length, while meditating under the Bodhi-tree, he received the revelation that he sought, and spent the rest of his life begging his food from door to door, while proclaiming his doctrine of salvation. According to legend he was twice tempted of the devil, once being offered a universal kingdom. His death, too, is said to have been marked by the miraculous appearance to him of his dead mother.

The various events of Buddha's life, traditional or admittedly historical, including his many reincarnations, have furnished the painters of China with innumerable subjects for their brush.

Buddhism before it came to China had split into two schools, Hinayâna and Mahâyâna (meaning the 'Lesser and Greater Vehicles'). Hinayâna believed in the liberation of man as an individual and taught the doctrine of his becoming an Arhat (or Lohan) for his own sake. Mahâyâna developed the theory of the Bodhi-

sattva, a being or man, who had reached the last stage but one, in the course of becoming a Buddha, but who voluntarily remained in the world to help all mankind reach the higher plane. Hinayāna was egotistical; Mahāyāna, merciful and compassionate. While both forms of Buddhism flourished in China, it was Mahāyāna that gained the greater following, as it accorded better with the racial characteristics of the Chinese. Its principal gospel was 'The Awakening of Faith' by Asvaghosha who lived in the reign of the first ruler of the Indo-Scythian or Kushan Empire.

It was the practical side of Buddhism that appealed to the home-loving Chinese, with its incitement to humane and self-disciplined living, rather than its monastic institutions and speculative creeds. Buddhism as it developed in China became in many respects a distinctly national product. It never attempted to supplant or overthrow the local creeds or observances, at most only softening and humanizing them. It borrowed from them so many features that the borderline between them is often very shadowy. It differs, consequently, materially from the Buddhism of India in earlier times, and from the Tibetan, Ceylonese, and Siamese of later. The worship of mortuary relics was exchanged for the rites of the *shēn*, the earthen charnel-house (*stūpa*) for the cheerful ancestral shrine, the Nirvāna of speculative Buddhism for the paradise of Amitābha; and much of its cosmic and geographical lore had its foundation in native Chinese traditions.

According to the often repeated story of the introduction of Buddhism into China (now discredited as a legend without foundation, but important as influencing

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the artist), the Emperor Ming (A.D. 65) saw a golden image in a dream and sent an embassy to learn the great teachings which it represented. In the course of time, the embassy returned bringing images of Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and two Indian monks. At first Buddhism did not strike very deep into the soil of China for no Chinese were allowed to become priests, and it was entirely dominated by foreigners. Later, during the wars of the Three Kingdoms, these restrictions were removed and Buddhism became a vital force in Chinese life. In that and the two succeeding centuries many famous pilgrimages were made to India by Chinese Buddhist priests — Fa Hsien, Hsiüan (or Yüan) Chuang, and I Ching, all of whom left records of their journeys. China became eventually the seat of Mahâyâna Buddhism, while in India proper it almost died out. It spread to eastern, central, and northwestern Asia. Korea received it direct from China in the fourth century, and Japan received it from Korea in the sixth and seventh. Tibet received it also in the seventh century and the Mongols in the thirteenth. But in these two latter, it changed its form in the fifteenth century to that of the present Lamaism. In all these countries different schools or sects grew up and flourished side by side.

Mahâyâna Buddhism teaches that an inscrutable Supreme Being manifests himself in a multitude of ways, but especially through the Buddhas. It stresses the tenet of the migration of souls into animals, with its natural corollary of abstention from their slaughter. While this doctrine has influenced the practical Chinese, it has never dominated them as it has the Indian.

This Mahâyâna Buddhism adopted a belief in a personal existence that was dependent on personal conduct. This belief resulted in a doctrine of heaven and hell and found expression in an elaborate series of purgatories; these purgatories or hells were unlike the Christian in that they were not permanent but transitory.

The Buddha in China is an object of common worship; but even more frequently are the Bodhisattvas appealed to. Since these beings, though fitted to enter the final stage of Buddhahood, have on account of their love for humanity postponed this final stage for countless ages in order to minister to the needs and mitigate the woes of mankind, they are said to be ever ready to hear the cries of the unhappy. The most popular of these are Amitâbha and Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin). The latter became feminine in the course of the centuries, and represents the Buddhist form of the Mariolatry. She preaches salvation by means of good works and devotional observances. She is known variously as the Queen of Heaven, the All-Compassionate One, the Ever-Enduring Savior.

The Confucians who were continually jealous of Buddhism, looked upon its beliefs of celibacy and its advocacy of the monastic life as an 'unnatural loosening of family and patriotic ties'; and as early as the eighth century, an 'official persecution' broke out against Buddhism in which monasteries were closed and twelve thousand monks and nuns forced to return to secular life. Each of the immediately succeeding centuries saw similar closings of monasteries.

The growth of Buddhism in China was largely due to the interest and protection of various emperors, who

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saw in it a chance to curb the power of the Confucian literati, who often censored the acts of the ruler and were a constant obstacle to his military ambitions. Confucianism maintained the supremacy of the civil over the military power, and by its peaceful precepts largely nullified imperial schemes for aggrandizement. It is said that the patronage of the Han, T'ang, and Yüan rulers were conferred upon Buddhism for this reason.

Dr. Johnson, in his 'Oriental Religions,' summarizes the teachings of this Mahâyâna form of Buddhism as an earnest effort to mitigate the burdens of life, to counterbalance the sense of impermanence, to lead those conscious of sinfulness and disharmony to trust in remedial laws and in a final release. It soon won an influential place in Chinese life by its attempt to interpret the inexorableness of natural cause and effect in the interest of ethical justice, and to reconcile them with spiritual ideals; by its philosophy of atonement through righteousness alone; its gospel of pity; its call to absolute abnegation and eternal devotion to the good of mankind; its pure ethics; its peaceful disciples; its ardor in constructive labor and arts; and its tolerance of all beliefs which pursue the same end of human good and its rejection of punishment for opinions sake.

According to the story (now discredited as to its historical accuracy, but of importance from its artistic influence) the Twenty-Eighth Patriarch, Bodhidharma, known in Chinese as Ta Mo, arrived in China in A.D. 526 and visited the court of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty. The emperor was an ardent ritualist and the sage could not brook his endless ceremonies.

The doctrine that he taught was far divorced from ceremonies; he is credited with saying ‘you will not find Buddha in images, nor in books; look in your own heart — that is where you will find Buddha.’ He departed from the court in haste according to the legend, crossing the swollen waters of the Yangtze on a reed, and betook himself to the hills, where he founded the Ch’an or contemplative school of Buddhism — the Zen sect as it is more often called by Western writers, following the Japanese.

A religion that taught that no guidance was necessary other than that the student found in Nature and his own intelligence and musings, tended to develop individualism. Zenism joined with Taoism, which also based much of its teachings on natural phenomena, in opposing the stereotyping effect of Confucianism that submerged the individual in the mass. Many of the Zen priests stand out both as great landscape and portrait painters.

The three religions of China, as has been said, each in its own way fulfilled some mood to which the soul of man is subject, supplementing each other, and moulded not only the religious but the social and artistic life of China. Confucianism and Taoism, far apart as they might be in some of their teachings, both agreed in assuming a personal life, personal advancement, development of the natural faculties, and the gratification of personal wishes to be good things in themselves — things to be controlled by our regard for the rights of others, yet to be much desired and striven for. Both sought happiness in success: one in the enjoyment of a well-ordered, peaceful public and private life, where the

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duties of life were suitably fulfilled; the other in the enjoying of good luck and the blissful absorption into the celestial state of immortality enjoyed by the *hsien*. To both life itself was a good thing, and they sought to prolong it and expand its scope and energies. But there is yet another mood of man, the antithesis of this, that regards all such things as vain, and looks upon renunciation as the highest virtue and absorption into the Universal as the desirable end. This mood found its satisfaction in Buddhism. It gave the Chinese painter matter for deep moral and philosophical speculations.

The three religions combined caused the artist to reverence life and all its manifestation: the bud opening in the spring, the great men of former generations whose labor aided men yet unborn, and all that which leads the mind out into the Infinite. They made living itself a ritual. The Chinese painter portrayed Nature's loveliness and grandeur and human virtues no less reverently than he did the subjects consecrated by formal religious observance.

Closely interwoven in all Chinese thought, and probably dating back to some form of primitive religion, is the doctrine of *Yin Yang*, the dualistic theory of the Cosmos — a twin-fanged key, as it has been called. In the beginning, according to this doctrine, there was nothing, all was emptiness and void. Then, whether by a creator or spontaneously is not clear, matter came into being as formless ether which is known as *T'ai Chi*, Primal Matter. After a long period, this divided into two parts, the *Yang* and the *Yin*, one remaining in suspension to form heaven, the other precipitating to form earth. Everything in nature became either *Yang* or *Yin*.



WINTER LANDSCAPE

Sung



Heaven, light, warmth, masculinity, paternity, productivity, life, all are *Yang*. The earth, darkness, cold, femininity, maternity, weakness, death, are *Yin*. This conception of the duality of life enters into every phase of Chinese life, national or domestic. It is the basis of the doctrine of counterbalance on which Chinese civilization is built.

This doctrine with the many elaborations which it took centuries to evolve, first found expression in the Trigrams or Pa Kua (sometimes spelled Pakwa) attributed to the semi-legendary being, Fu Hsi; its full development, however, was not reached until the Sung Dynasty.

The structure of Chinese society resulting from the interplay of these various beliefs, is too complicated to more than indicate. China has often been called by the foreigner a land of paradoxes. It was a democracy ruled by an emperor, a land of conformity that had no objection to accepting a peasant as an emperor; bound by traditions, it yet allowed great religious and philosophical freedom.

Chinese social rank is the antithesis of that in the West. At the top of the social structure stands the scholar, to whom is paid the highest honor, not only in theory but in practice; from this class were chosen the governors and other rulers of the country. The scholar achieved his rank by hard study and the passing of certain competitive examinations in what might be called a great scholastic civil service. The works of Confucius and other great writers were the basis of their study, and learning was a passport that might lead to even the rank of a viceroy. The examinations were open to all,

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no matter how humble their origin, except to actors, barbers, and a few other trades. This 'government by brains,' by civil service examination, developing as it did a ruling scholastic class, is the notable contribution China has made to world forms of government.

Second in rank came the farmer. Agriculture was looked upon as a 'noble art,' the backbone of the country. From the earth comes food and every good thing that sustains life, and who can be more worthy than those whose work produces it?

The third class consisted of skilled workers and hand-craftsmen of all kinds. It called for 'heaven-given skill and laborious patience.'

The fourth and lowest class was made up of merchants and business men, the non-producers.

Soldiers appear to have been in a class apart, as they might be drawn from any of the preceding. They, too, were non-producers and were looked down upon as such. They were supposed to be always under the direction of the civil authorities, though in unsettled times this did not hold true. Only a few of them have ever found their way into niches of national reverence, and these few usually for some other distinction than their warlike proclivities.

The position of the emperor, too, was very different from the one ascribed to him by early Western scholars, bred in the doctrine of the 'divine right of kings.' Though he was known as the 'Son of Heaven,' this title was his only so long as he ruled in accord with the dictates of Heaven, whose viceroy he was considered to be. In the very early days there was no right of primogeniture, the Chinese rulers often passing over their own

sons and appointing some more suitable member of the imperial clan — as when Yao chose Shun, and Shun in turn chose Yü. As Mencius points out, though Heaven does not express its choice in words, yet if peace and prosperity are in All-Below-the-Sky, it is proof of the emperor's fitness to rule. In the reverse order, famine, disorder, and misery were taken as signs of his incapacity and evidences of Heaven's displeasure. If the ruler did not voluntarily abdicate in the face of these signs, the Chinese held that public-spirited citizens should raise the standard of revolt against him. Dynasty after dynasty, including the Manchu, fell before this divine mandate of the people. As one European writer points out, the ruler was in reality an emperor — a president chosen by Heaven *and* the people, and not as in Western republics, by the people alone.

Keyserling summarizes the position and obligations of the emperor, somewhat poetically it is true, as 'the tie which unites heaven and earth, just as the peasant is the link which joins the earth to man. Thus he bears responsibility for nature. A well-observed ritual vouches for the normal sequences of the seasons of the year; if rain which the farmer needs comes too late, then the emperor must do penance remorsefully. His might and his position vouch for the harmonious functions of creation, his character vouches for that of his ministers, his behavior for that of his subjects. Thus, his right of autocracy is simultaneously all-embracing responsibility which conditions and limits him strictly . . . he is responsible in the sense of the main mechanism of a watch. If the watch goes badly, the fault is always

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apparent in the main mechanisms, . . . if the main mechanism is out of order, then it suffers first; it comes to a standstill by itself or else it breaks. Thus the dynasty which does not know how to rule must disappear sooner or later. . . . This marvellous conception of the calling and position of a ruler of men is the logical consequence of that general outlook on the world which characterizes the Chinese more than anything else. According to this view, the laws of morality and nature belong to the single unified system. Identical laws rule moral behavior, the sequence of the seasons and the changes of day and night; it is a single, all-embracing cohesion, which rounds off into harmonious unity the non-human and the human, the organic and the inorganic, the natural and the moral qualities. Moral force, however, is the primary one. . . . In the [Chung-yung] it is written, "No sooner has the Emperor set his person in order than all duties toward him are fulfilled, no sooner does he pay due reverence to the wise men than he will differentiate with unerring correctness between error and truth, good and evil; no sooner does he show his parents the love which he owes them than all strife will cease between his uncles, between his older and younger brothers; as soon as he honours his ministers according to their deserts, the business of state will prosper; as soon as he treats his subordinate officials correctly, the literati will fulfill their functions at the ceremonies with appropriate zeal. As soon as he loves his people like his son, this people will strive to emulate him; as soon as he has gathered together scholars and artists at his court, his riches will be put to the right use; as soon as he receives strange visitors in a friendly man-

ner, men will flow together from the four corners of the world in his empire in order to participate in its blessings."

In his government the emperor was assisted by a large number of officials drawn from the literati, many of them poets, painters, and philosophers. As the emperor was supposed to be the means of transmitting the will of Heaven (to which he rendered a yearly account of his stewardship), so the officials were regarded as his representatives and were personally responsible to him for the districts they governed. This delegating of authority was characteristic of the Chinese social system; it permeated its entire structure. It made of the empire so many autonomous families, so many communities, each of whose rulers was responsible to his superior alone, yet must act toward those under his direction as a father would to his children. Each was responsible for the good and evil that befell the community under his rule; just as the emperor to Heaven, so the viceroys to the emperor; and on down the official scale to the father of a family, who was responsible to the heads of his immediate community for the welfare of his household. Thus the family was made the cornerstone of the nation, and government only a larger interpretation of family life, while filial piety became a recognized form of patriotism.

Even the position of the emperor did not exempt him from criticism. His assistants were supposed to be his severest critics, and to express their criticisms to him very plainly. To insure the efficacy of this system, a board of censors was attached to the court and chosen from among the highest scholars. Their duty was to

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report not only on the welfare of the people but to censure the acts of the ruler himself if they considered them blameworthy. A son even was supposed to remonstrate with his father if that father acted unworthily, and the various canons of filial piety set forth the steps to be taken in arousing the father to his duty.

The only aristocracy that China has ever recognized was the aristocracy of culture, with the exception of that of the immediate relatives of the reigning dynasty. Titles were rewards of merit and did not endure beyond the lifetime of those on whom they were conferred, nor did the many titles conferred posthumously affect the descendants of the 'noble dead.'

A quotation from the classics on a panel behind the emperor's chair in one of the imperial palaces, as translated by Florence Ayscough, gives an admirable summary of the Chinese conception of good government:

'Only Heaven is All-hearing, All-seeing and perfect in Comprehension;  
Only the Perfect Ruler is at all times a Pattern;  
Only the absolutely sincere official reverently follows the ruler's example;  
Only the Virtuous people are obedient and allow their actions to be regulated.'

Or, in other words, it is only by the harmonious co-operation of all that good government can be achieved.

The personal application that might be made of these ideals in daily life is shown by the goal a Sung gentleman set himself, as quoted by Fenollosa: 'To be as pure as a plum blossom, free as a bird, strong as a pine, yet pliant as a willow.'

### CHAPTER III

#### THE HISTORY OF CHINA AS IT INFLUENCED THE ART

CHINA's place in the concert of nations has been largely ignored by Western historians, who have been accustomed to treating the Mediterranean, and the culture that grew up there, as the center of the universe. They formerly centered their attention entirely on the peoples of Babylonia, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, overlooking the great civilizations to the East which were developing almost entirely independently of their own. Yet these great Eastern civilizations have had a far-reaching influence. They have affected not only their own people, who numerically have greatly exceeded those of the West, but have continually modified Western culture and civilization. Motivated by trade, even antedating recorded history, there was always a more or less constant intercourse between the East and the West.

The Chinese chroniclers, to be sure, were no less insular in their records than Western historians.

China has been called the melting-pot of Asia. To the casual Western eye there is but one type of Chinese; but to the experienced, they differ as widely as Norwegian and Italian — English and Serbian. There are the contrasting types of the Northern Chinese and the Cantonese, the inhabitants of the Yellow River and the Yangtze, the coolies of Ssüch'uan and of Fuchien.

Geographically the Chinese nation has never been

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more of a unit than the Roman Empire was. Between the Middle Kingdom, as China proper was called, and her dependencies, Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea, are mountains, deserts, and seas; an immense difference in climate, soil, and products still further distinguishes them, modifying their inhabitants and their customs. Each province differs so widely in customs, and in some cases even in racial stock, that it is impossible to generalize without allowing for a vast number of exceptions. And yet, in spite of these dissimilarities, there has been a core of unity that has enabled China to create and maintain a definite culture, to evolve the one permanent and living civilization the world has ever known. China has for centuries been the meeting-place of many races, languages, and religions, the receptacle into which has trickled something of the learning and the treasures of all the world. She has been able, however, in spite of these cosmopolitan influences, to retain an entity of her own, to keep unbroken her art continuity and make it a vital expression of the mind and spirit of her people.

The Chinese had a unique method of recording history so that it might be as unbiased as humanly possible. When an emperor ascended to the throne, a well-known literary man was appointed to record the events of the reign as they occurred. This record, when completed, was deposited, *unread*, in a casket and sealed. There it remained until the downfall of the dynasty which might not occur for two or three hundred years; then it was taken out, edited, and published. In this way it was impossible for an emperor to influence what posterity was to know of him by suppressing facts.

The chroniclers treated history, as did Western historians until recently, solely as a record of the events of the changing dynasties, including in them very little of the social history of their times. Chinese political history may be briefly summarized as a series of dynasties, some of them drawn from the peasant class, gaining their position by force of arms. Each was at first strong, then gradually weakened until it dissolved into a period of civil war and invasion, sometimes lasting for centuries, and each was ultimately succeeded by a new dynasty that temporarily established a new central government. Coeval with these changing dynasties and scarcely disturbed by them was the main stream of Chinese life, religious and cultural, producing masterpieces of secular and religious art, creating a great literature, and developing and refining profound ethical teachings.

Where the Chinese came from is still a matter of conjecture, their own annals throw no light upon it, and recent excavations still leave the subject in profound darkness.

The traditional first emperor, who may or may not have been more than a legendary figure, was Huang Ti. To him is ascribed the founding of Chinese civilization. Under his direction the cyclical period of *chia-tzü* was arranged, astronomical instruments and a calendar were made; the arts of mathematics and music arrived at a high degree of perfection, and a medium of currency was established. He is alleged to have taught his people how to manufacture utensils of wood, pottery, and metal, and to have introduced the use of boats and wheeled vehicles. To his wife is attributed the intro-

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duction of the cultivation of the silkworm and the invention of the art of weaving. Three other great model emperors of this legendary or semi-legendary period were Yao, Shun, and Yü the Great, whose dates, if any, fall somewhere about three thousand years b.c. Their age is regarded in the Chinese classics somewhat as the 'Golden Age' is with us. The life of this period is fast being reconstructed from the material found in the recent excavations in China, but it is yet too early to make very definite statements in regard to it.

When recorded history began, the Chinese occupied a small part of what now constitutes China, along the banks of the upper Yellow River. They were an agricultural people, as they still are, and had already reached a high level of civilization. The written history is usually said to have begun with the Chou Dynasty, dating approximately from b.c. 1122-255 (the first date is probably placed seventy years too early), although inscribed bone carvings and bronzes, attributed to the Shang period, have been found. This recorded history may be said to fall into two cycles, one before the introduction of Buddhism, and the other after it. It was in this first period, the classical period of India, Israel, Greece, and Rome, that Chinese bronzes reached their perfection. Artists and craftsmen alike were already bound by a severe and rigid formalism proscribed by tradition and rule, showing that there was even then a very old and highly developed civilization behind them. The examples of their work that have come down to us have been found for the most part in tombs. The designs upon them are abstract and archaic in form, and deeply imbued with a symbolism, the mean-

ings of which have been almost entirely lost to us. The materials used were bone, bronze, and jade. The pottery found so far has been very primitive, though it is known that antedating this period pottery had reached a much higher state of development.

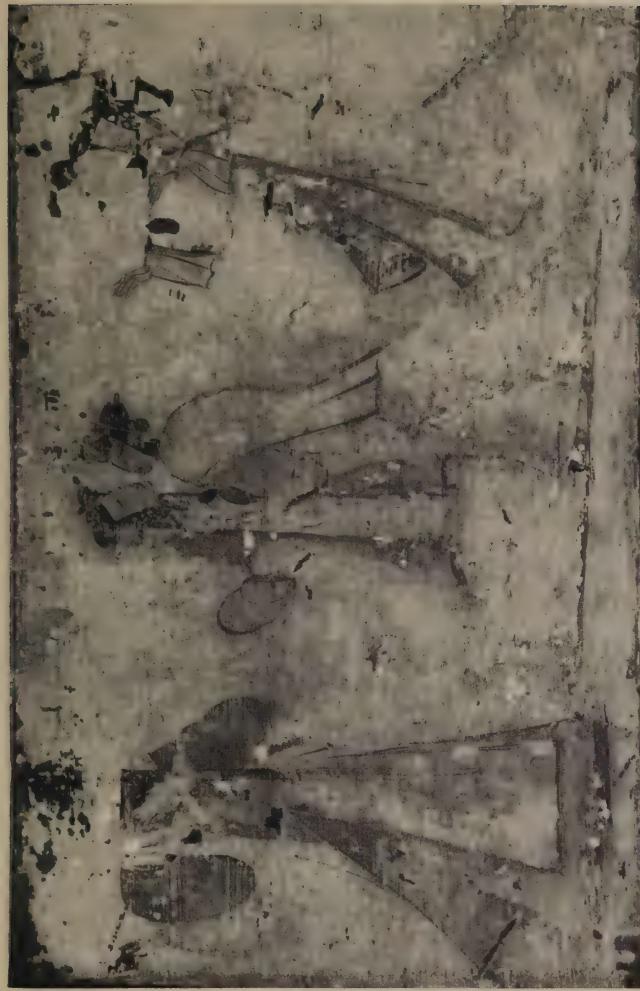
Under this Chou Dynasty, a feudal system was established that lasted for centuries. Religion and commerce flourished. Writing was introduced, and iron weapons and implements came into use. During this time Lao Tzü, Confucius, and Mencius lived and taught; and the works were written which have since become the standard of literature in China. (This period corresponds somewhat to the dynasty of David in Israel. Each covered the period of their country's cultural glory, each was marked by the production of a classic literature to which succeeding generations have done reverence.) During this time Rome was founded; the Parthenon was built, the Homeric poems committed to writing, and the great library and museum of Alexandria built. Phidias, Myron, and others were creating the great art of Greece; and Socrates and Plato were propounding their philosophies. Alexander the Great attempted, too, during this period to realize his dream of a world empire, and penetrated as far as India.

The Chou was succeeded by a short-lived dynasty, Ch'in or T'sin Dynasty as it is often spelled, dating from 256 (Pelliot places it as late as 221) to B.C. 206. It is most widely known for its first emperor Shih Huang who began to build the Great Wall as a protection against the fierce invading hordes of Central Asia, who were even then attempting to overrun China. This wall is an engineering feat equal to the building of the pyra-

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mids of Egypt. The emperor was a vigorous innovator and believed in a strongly centralized government, bending all his powers to achieving this end. He succeeded in wiping out feudalism, but was less successful in his attempt to break the hold of traditionalism upon his people when he ordered the classics to be burned, and inflicted severe penalties on all who disobeyed. This order, regarded as sacrilege by succeeding generations, has been attributed to his vanity and his desire to be known as the 'first emperor.' It is more probable that it was caused by his inability to break the power of the feudal princes, who had the support of the literati, and a desire to overcome the throttling inertia which Confucian teachings, with their reverence for the past, were already fastening on the country. He rendered great benefits to China, unifying the weights and measures and building highroads. At this time also a marked change is apparent in art, though it had probably begun some years previous and cannot be ascribed entirely to his radical ideas. It became more naturalistic, the curves and meanders of the bronzes became more rounded, and the decorations more refined. His impression, not only on his own generation, but upon succeeding ones, was so great that the Chinese are said to derive their national title as used in the West from his dynastic name of Ch'in or T'sin. From the civil wars that occurred after his death arose the Han Dynasty.

The Han Dynasty marked the beginning of the second of the two cycles in Chinese history — the one influenced by Buddhist thought. Buddhism made as vital a change in Chinese life as did the introduction of



EARLY FIGURE-PAINTING ON TILE

Pre-T'ang

Done in the Han style



Christianity into Europe, both events occurring at about the same time.

The rulers of the Han period, which lasted roughly from two hundred years before Christ to two hundred years after and was contemporary with Rome, restored the old classic literature, many copies of which had been hidden by devoted Confucians, and fostered scholarship in every possible manner. It was a time of excellent literary criticism, but of little creative work, a condition, indeed, that characterized the entire world at the period. Men were content to sift the material of the past, estimate and arrange it in encyclopedias. A bureaucratic form of government was established, a system that has influenced Chinese governmental policies ever since. Men did not seem to feel a great need for religion — Buddhism, though introduced at this time, made but slow progress — as reverence for the masters of the classic age seemed to be enough.

In spite of their great reliance on tradition, individualism began to make itself felt in art. Archaic designs were less frequent, while new designs and forms appeared, showing action, dignity, and breadth of treatment. Ornamentation, so great a feature of later work, began to show itself, especially in modeling, and glazes were used on pottery.

Perhaps the greatest event, so far as painting was concerned, was the invention of paper. Painting, especially portraiture, seems to have flourished at this time, though our knowledge of it is entirely based on indirect references and the stone engravings (bas-reliefs) found in the Han tombs which are believed to be reproductions of the actual paintings possessed by the dead during their lifetime.

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It was an age of great imperialism, coeval with the great age of Rome. The Chinese were brought in touch with the Iranian peoples, and indirectly even with Rome. Marcus Aurelius appears in their history as An Tun which stands for Antoninus. Rome sent to China for silk; and it is said that their merchants penetrated to Tonkin in North Indo-China and thence to Canton. It was during this time that China first attained the immense prestige among the Asiatics that lasted untarnished until the nations of Europe battered in her doors. Even now it is only slightly diminished.

Han civilization eventually became so brittle that it broke under its own weight: interior corruption and the pressure of migrating Huns. These restless peoples of central Asia who under Attila were to spread terror into Europe, ushered into China four hundred years of anarchy, civil war, and invasion. But these dark ages of China did not last as long as did those of Europe, nor were they so black. European culture was at a lower ebb, the art of Greece and Rome was waning, and Christian art, still in its infancy, was confined to the catacombs. Religion, however, was to be the vitalizing force in both. Christianity was spreading through Europe, and Buddhism becoming a power in China. Each was bringing with it a new life impulse which, though slow moving, was destined to modify profoundly the civilizations with which it came in contact.

China was broken up into Three Kingdoms (A.D. 221-265). The events of this period are too confused to epitomize. The records abound with marvelous adventure and thrilling incidents; the scenes of many Chinese novels and dramas of later date are laid back in

this period. It is regarded in Chinese history as the age of chivalry such as Europe was to know many centuries later. Again for a few years China was unified, then split into two kingdoms (A.D. 240-589), a Chinese in the south and a Tartar in the north. The southern kingdom was ruled by the Six Dynasties, A.D. 395-580; the last of these, the Sui, again brought China under the sway of a native emperor and prepared the way for the T'ang. To Westerners this period is known by the general title of the Six Dynasties. The Tartar Dynasty in the north was known as the Wei.

During this tumult of unrest, the conservative Confucian teachings had little appeal, and men turned to Buddhism which offered a way of escape from the sinful and distressed world about them. Temples and pagodas were built everywhere, particularly on some especially beautiful spot, or a place hallowed by sacred memories. The retired religious life became the ideal of the multitude. The road to India was still open, although the road to Europe had been closed, and religious pilgrims were constantly traveling back and forth, like bees unconsciously fertilizing the culture of one country with the ideas of the other.

Sculpture reached its highest development in this period, notably in the kingdom of Wei. Though in painting a long list of artists' names have come down to us, all of their work has perished, except a few questioned examples such as the painting in the British Museum, attributed to Ku K'ai-chih.

In Europe during this period, the Byzantine Empire was founded, Rome destroyed, and Mohammed began his militant teachings that were to act as a wedge be-

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tween the cultures of the Far East and the West. Christian art was expressing its triumphs, ecstasies, and beliefs largely through Byzantine architecture and religious mosaics.

First under the Sui, and then fully under the T'ang emperors (A.D. 618-907), China was again united and its ancient glory revived and enhanced. Tibet, Eastern Turkestan, Korea, and a large part of Indo-China were brought under the influence of the Chinese throne. Armies were sent over the mountains into Kashmir, and expeditions to Samarkand to stem the rising power of the Arabs. Chinese commerce was known throughout the civilized world. Arabs established trading stations at Canton and other Chinese ports about the middle of the eighth century. It is said that over four thousand foreign families lived in the Chinese capital. If we may trust the account of Ibn Wahab, one of the Arab traders upon whom we are dependent for much of our knowledge of China at that time, the Emperor of China mentioned the Emperor of Rome with himself as one of the five world kings of the day, thus evidencing some knowledge of Western civilization. And even as early as the reign of T'ai Tsung, envoys numbering in the hundred are said to have visited his court from the Byzantine Empire and Persia. The population of the country at that time is estimated to have been about fifty-three million.

The T'ang Dynasty was marked by great religious tolerance. T'ai Tsung and his immediate successors welcomed with an open hand every religious faith that came to them. Within thirty years, a cordial welcome had been extended to the first Christian missionaries,

the deposed king of Persia with his Mazdean priests, and Manichæan missionaries. All were given equal freedom to propagate their faiths, and all enjoyed the help and favor of the emperor. While the T'ang emperors considered themselves the lineal descendants of Lao Tzü, they were liberal patrons of Confucian scholars, and welcomed the great Buddhist apostle, Hsüan Chuang.

Among the many foreigners present at the T'ang court were scholars from Japan. The Japanese woman's dress, the kimono, and many of the customs of present-day Japan, were imported from China during this period and have remained practically unmodified.

This contact with the civilizations and religious faiths of many lands broadened the culture of the men of T'ang times until they were almost world citizens, and stimulated them into great creative activity.

This dynasty is marked by an artistic renaissance that found its highest expression in painting and poetry; the 'Complete Collection of the Poetry of the T'ang Period' contains forty-eight thousand nine hundred poems. The great library of T'ai Tsung comprised more than two hundred thousand volumes. This 'Augustan age' lasted more than a century and culminated in the reign of Ming Huang.

The reign of Ming Huang, A.D. 712-756, is usually likened to the Elizabethan period when English genius was at its flower. As in all periods of tranquillity and prosperity, men's thoughts turned to the æsthetics. It produced the three greatest poets of China, Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chü-i, and the equally great painters Wu Tao-tzü, Wang Wei, and Han Kan. During this reign also the Hanlin Academy was founded.

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The reign of Ming Huang, which lasted for forty-four years, began very auspiciously. He prohibited extravagance and instituted many reforms. In addition to founding the Hanlin Academy, he established an academy of music and reformed the public examinations. Heretofore the outlaying provinces of the empire had been badly governed and a source of great weakness to the country; it had been the custom to appoint refractory metropolitan officials as their governors and viceroys, as a form of punishment and exile. Ming Huang persuaded men of reputation and ability to accept these posts, and saw to it that it was worth their while. It was also a period of far-reaching military success. The great commander Kao Hsien-chih carried Chinese arms beyond the Pamirs. The Khan of the Turks was deposed, the King of Samarkand forced to pay tribute, and the kings of Kashmir and Gandhara reduced to the position of vassals. The capital, Ch'ang-an, was thronged with Syrians, Turks, and Persians; Christianity, Buddhism, Manichæism, and Zoroastrianism flourished side by side. Ch'ang-an became the capital of the world in the sense that Rome was during the Middle Ages.

In his old age, however, Ming Huang became infatuated with the greatest figure of romantic love in Chinese history, Yang Kuei-fei, and his reign ended in revolution, preceded by many military disasters. Soon after his abdication, in favor of his son, the T'ang Dynasty tottered to its fall.

The T'ang period was marked by little philosophic speculation; men were too busy 'doing' to waste time on analyzing the why and wherefore of what they did. It was a time of almost naïve religious faith, very deep and

sincere nevertheless, and of lyric poetry. The minor arts, too, flourished greatly. True porcelain was made during this period for the first time, and designs were painted both on and under glaze. Its forms had great variety and beauty. Especially interesting are the clay tomb figures in their naturalism, grace, and perfection of form.

In contrast to the great refinement and luxury of this period, and its high artistic development, was the chaotic condition of civilization in Europe. The Danes were attempting to invade England in spite of the vigorous defense of Alfred the Great (871-901); and on the Continent Charlemagne was hewing out his Empire of the West. Learning was confined to the powerful monastic orders, and even so great an emperor could not write his name. During this period also the feudal system was established (nearly a thousand years after China had abolished hers). Western civilization reached its highest development in the Moorish (Saracen) Empire, which extended from Persia, through Syria and North Africa, into Spain and even France, carrying with it a knowledge of geometry, algebra, medicine, agriculture, and botany, some of which are said to have been derived from the Far East. It was an age of darkness for sculpture and painting; only mosaics and a few illuminated religious manuscripts kept the flame alive. It was a time of great superstition, and progress was stultified by the very general belief that the world was coming to an end in the year one thousand.

The period of disunion that followed the downfall of the T'ang Dynasty lasted for nearly sixty years (A.D. 907-960) and is known as the Five Dynasties. These

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dynasties followed each other in rapid succession. While there were many artists of worth painting during this period, they followed the mode of the T'ang, and made no new departures in art.

The chaos of the Five Dynasties was brought to an end by the ascendancy of one of the many warring generals, who founded for himself the Sung Dynasty in A.D. 960. A period now began in cultural achievement equal to that of the T'ang, but of a very different character. The T'ang period had been a time of military conquest and widely expanding frontiers, of broad contacts, not only with near-by nations, but with the countries of the West. It had been marked by youthful freshness and deep religious faith, lyric poetry, and a great and lofty art. The Sung period was an era, on the contrary, of shrinking empire, and comparative isolation from the outside world. It was marked by many experiments in what would be called socialism to-day, by philosophical discussions, by inventive ability and by high scholarship.

It was while the power of the Sung Dynasty was at its height, during the reign of the Emperor Shêng Tsung, that the socialistic experiment was made. He appointed Wang An-shih (A.D. 1021-1086), the great Confucian reformer, as premier. Wang An-shih's ideas, though they were first formulated in the Han Dynasty and were strictly in accord with the Confucian teachings, were a challenge to the established order. He advocated strict government control of commerce, industry, and agriculture, with a resulting fixing of prices, a land-tax, graduated according to the fertility of the soil, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and a minimum

wage. These policies of his, though Confucian in concept, divided the Confucians themselves into two hostile camps. His most bitter opponent was the eminent historian Ssü-ma Kuang, who was supported in his opposition by some of the foremost scholars and literary men of the time. Wang An-shih used drastic methods in enforcing his policies and banished all who opposed him. As a consequence, he denuded the government service of many of the most brilliant men, and was forced to create practically a one-man government. Such a government was foredoomed to failure; and after some six years the very people he was trying to assist turned against him, and he himself was banished. With his downfall the anti-reform party surged back to the capital, and the power of the Sungs began to wane. The political history of the next few years consists of the struggle between these two parties for domination and their alternation in office. No man was certain of his position from day to day. This political dissension so weakened the empire that it fell a ready prey to the Chin or Golden Tartars, who during the reign of Hui Tsung overran the country.

The Sung was an age marked by great advancement in invention. The magnetic needle which had formerly been used as a toy or a means for locating a favorable position for a grave, was now applied to navigation, and gunpowder was for the first time employed in warfare. Printing grew from an obscure Buddhist art to one of national importance; it became the means of restoring Confucian literature and teachings to the position of popularity that they had held before the introduction of Buddhism. A classical renaissance followed comparable

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to the renaissance Europe was to know many years later; both were motivated by the spread of knowledge through the printing-press.

This period was particularly rich in great men in all fields. In addition to the social reformer Wang An-shih and his opponent, the historian Ssü-ma Kuang, there were Ou-yang Hsiu, the archæologist whose scientific spirit is comparable with that of Chavannes; Shén Kua, the scholar who wrote (incidentally) on the compass and the influences that governed it; and Chu Hsi and Chou Tun-i, the great philosophers. It was a time of great erudition and accurate thought. Extensive studies in political economy and great compendiums of history were made. Botany and medicine reached a higher development and were more accurately studied than ever before in the world's history, except for one short period in Greece. Philosophic speculation and great systems of thought took the place of religious faith.

The height of material comfort and refinement to which the Sung civilization rose is shadowed in Marco Polo's descriptions (though at the period in which he wrote it was already on its decline). This Venetian, coming from the most magnificent city of Europe, was immensely impressed with the splendor of China. He marveled at Lin-an, the former capital of the South Sung Dynasty, which he describes as surpassing 'all others in the world, in point of grandeur and beauty, as well as from its abundant delights, which might lead an inhabitant to imagine himself in paradise.' He estimated the city as covering a hundred *li*, with its squares, market-places, and extensive paved streets and chains of canals that formed a sewerage system; he commented on its

police patrol, its fire protection, and its public hospitals. He tells of bridges so high that masted ships could pass under them and broad enough for horses and carts to ply back and forth over them; of market-days, held three times a week, frequented by forty to fifty thousand people; of great warehouses for the convenience of merchants from India and elsewhere, of three hundred public baths of hot and cold water used daily by the inhabitants; of the rich silks and jewelry worn by the population, even those of the merchant class; of the well-built and richly carved houses — ‘so much do they delight in ornaments of this kind, in paintings, and fancy buildings, that the sums they lavish on such subject are enormous’ (and this from an inhabitant of the richest and most prodigal city in Europe!). He says that their neighborliness was so great that persons who inhabit the same street ‘appear like one family,’ and praises their courtesy to the members of their families and their cordial hospitality to strangers. He was greatly impressed with the large lake, thirty miles long, bordered with palaces, monasteries, and temples, and especially by the two islands with their great central palaces and surrounding pavilions for the free use of the citizens who wished to give wedding feasts or other entertainments.

The contrast between the civilization of Europe, which was only in the bud at the beginning of the Sung Dynasty, and that of China, which was in full flower, is most marked. When the first Sung emperor came to the throne, Europe was still in the so-called Dark Ages. Religious faith was very childlike, and the Crusades, which were later to introduce the East to the West, had

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not yet been organized. The Vikings were ploughing the seas, and it may be discovering America. During these three hundred years William the Norman conquered England and imposed his Norman-French culture on Anglo-Saxon England. The Magna Carta was wrested from a reluctant king by an indignant nobility, and the first representative parliament called (a hundred years after China had failed in her experiment in socialism under Wang An-shih). The Crusades, which began in 1095, introduced much Asiatic culture into Europe, including the Gothic arch which is now generally conceded to have been of Eastern origin. The great Gothic cathedrals were built and adorned, and for the first time art passed from the hands of the ecclesiastics to those of lay artists. Dante was twelve years old and Giotto but a year when the Sung Dynasty fell.

The arts were fostered by the peaceful ideals of the Sung period and by the teachings of the Zen or Ch'an sect, which was capturing the imagination with its mystic longings. Lyric poetry gave place to learned prose and books ran to hundreds of volumes each. Painting carried on the lofty traditions of the T'ang; and the greatest and best now in existence date from this period. It reached its culmination during the reign of the Emperor Hui Tsung, said to have been a painter of ability himself. He was perhaps the greatest patron of art that China ever produced, requiring even his premier and ministers to be painters. He founded the Academy of Painting, a school which formulated certain definite rules of technique. These rules were so slavishly followed by certain painters of subsequent generations that they very nearly stultified Chinese art. In the be-



PORTRAIT OF PIH SHI-CH'ANG

Sung



ginning, however, they were beneficial. He made a famous collection, of both bronzes and paintings. The catalogue of his paintings has proved a fruitful source for the student of early Chinese art and much of our present knowledge is drawn from it. Most of the early true porcelains now extant date from this period. They are marked by great perfection of form, though with less variety in shape than later craftsmen attained. Glowing colors were used in the glazes. The designs were seldom painted, the potter relying on the perfection of form, incised or moulded decoration, and beautiful glazes for his effects. The stone-ware bodies were made rather thick to carry the heavy rich glazes for which the period was famous. Some few wares, however, were finely potted and had thin, unctious glazes. Designs, when used, were drawn with great freedom.

The Sung Empire, in spite of, or perhaps because of its great culture, lacked the virility successfully to repel the encroaching Tartars of the north. First came the Ch'itan or Liao and took the northern edge of the empire for their domain, then came the Chins, the ancestors of the Manchus, and occupied the country north of the Yangtze. The Sung emperors were forced to move their capital south to Lin-an, the modern Hangchou. Their reign there is known in history as the Southern Sung. The Emperor Hui Tsung, just before this move took place, was carried away captive to the northern fortress called the 'Castle of the Five Lands,' where he died twelve years later, and his great collection of art treasures scattered. After some unsuccessful campaigns under his son (it was during his reign that the capital was moved to Lin-an), the Chinese resigned themselves to the loss

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of the provinces north of the Yangtze, and settled down to make the best of the country that remained. Gradually they began to realize the remarkable beauty of the land to which Fate had banished them. They learned to regard with tender delight the beautiful gardens and the waters of the Western Lake, and, deliberately averting their minds from the menace to the north, sank into the sensuous lethargy and worship of the beautiful, of which Marco Polo gives so vivid a picture.

Genghis Khan's march across Asia toward Europe is one of the most momentous events in history. He and his successors created the nearest to a world empire that has ever been known. On their way they paused to bring all China under their sway. Their marvelous organizing ability set every one to work, and China awoke to renewed energy. Dreams and retrospections and mystic musings were forgotten; the mode of the time was action. For a long period there was little interest in the mystic paintings of the Zen sect and the romantic art of the thirteenth-century academy. The spirit of South Sung æstheticism fled to Japan, where it motivated the great Ashikaga period. Many of the great paintings of Ma Yüan and Hsia Kuei and other Sung masters found their way there, leaving China infinitely the poorer.

Each of the alien peoples who overran and ruled China during this time adopted Chinese culture and became thoroughly Chinese in their thoughts and ways of life — a demonstration of the marvelous power of the Chinese to absorb all the adverse forces that come against them. Each of them became in turn a bulwark of Chinese civilization against the other nomads of

the desert who were seeking to overrun her — first the Liao against the Chin and then the Chin against the Mongol.

The Mongolian conquest of China, and later of the West, was as revolutionary in its effects as the recent World War has been. It was coeval with the last Crusade, and the two together formed a great stream which carried the cultural seeds from one country to another, fertilizing the ideas of the East with the West, and those of the West with the East. This nearly world empire of the Mongols extended over China, Central Asia, Persia, Russia, into Poland, and even Germany. In the East it reached toward Japan, and into Java and India. It was based on tolerance and a willingness to adopt even the religious forms of the conquered peoples. There are documents in existence showing that they wrote to Christians as Christians and to Mohammedans as Mohammedans.

While China herself had already sent her silk and paper to the West, and possibly, as alleged by some scholars, the art of printing and porcelains as well, the Mongols acted as carriers for additional seeds from all the ancient cultures which they conquered.

It is interesting to note that, shortly after their arrival in the West the Renaissance began in Europe. Much or little importance may be attached to the coincidence. It is one that the historians have not yet attempted to substantiate and correlate. China on her side received many gifts from the West, but none so important as those she gave. Most notable of the return gifts was Persian blue which she later used so extensively in her ceramics. It is said to have been introduced into China

by Persian craftsmen who were deported there by the Mongols just as they carried Chinese craftsmen with them to Persia.

The Yüan Dynasty, 1280–1368, as the Mongol reign was called, made very few changes in the life of China. Their policy was to accept the customs of the lands they conquered.

The novel and the drama became popular for the first time during this period, though it was considered a rather vulgar form and hardly worthy of being designated as literature.

It was during this Yüan Dynasty that China saw Europe closely for the first time. It was a Europe still far behind China in culture and civilization, a medieval Europe based on an aristocracy that held the people in what amounted almost to slavery. The Hundred Years' War was depleting England and France; and religious intolerance was so fanatical that John Wycliff was martyred for translating the Bible into English. Yet it was a Europe preparing for the Renaissance. It produced Dante, Chaucer, Giotto, the father of modern painting, and Petrarch, the humanist.

The successors of Kublai Khan were weak, and within a hundred years the dynasty fell before the onslaughts of a purely Chinese dynasty. The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, was founded by Hung Wu. Under the Mings China again became unified and rose to power. She adopted a policy of isolation, for her contacts with the West had not been very happy from her point of view. But this isolation did not last long. In 1514 Portuguese traders arrived in southern China by sea, and toward the middle of the century established them-

selves in leased territory at Macao, territory which they still hold. They were soon followed by the Dutch and the English. In former times China's intercourse with the West had been almost entirely by caravan route; from now on it was to be by sea.

This policy of seclusion, far from helping China, led to arrested development. Up to this time China had been much in advance of any other country in the world in culture. From now on she only marked time. For a brief period at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, it did seem, to be sure, as if the Sung traditions would be revived, but it was only for a brief period, and retrogression soon set in. Europe, on the other hand, entered into the period of her greatest cultural advancement. Gutenberg began to print, and soon the Renaissance and the Reformation were revolutionizing social and artistic conditions. A host of great men arose: Chaucer and Roger Bacon, Leonardo, Luther, Dante, Milton, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Galileo, Calvin, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens, Dürer, Velásquez, Rembrandt, and Molière, to name but a few. The making of porcelain was localized in Europe, and silk culture and weaving found a home. Men were fast passing beyond the necessities of life and attaining the luxuries.

During the first part of the Ming Dynasty, something of the greatness of Sung poetry and art revived, then the artists settled down into a slavish following of the rules of the Academy. Idealism gave way to opulence and materialism. Ornamentation became very rich and color played a leading part in all the arts. There was a great expansion in porcelain making, and painted decorations became more common, being executed with great

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skill. Three-color and five-color glazes were also introduced, and blue-and-white porcelain flourished.

The Ming Dynasty, which was noted for its luxury and wealth, followed the history of preceding dynasties, and went down in corruption, to be succeeded by a strong dynasty, that of the Ch'ing, or Manchu as it is often called, 1644-1911. These Manchus were a Tungusian tribe from the north. Though they forced the Chinese to wear ques as a badge of defeat, they had the wit not to attempt to destroy Chinese civilization, and became patrons of art and learning. They once more extended China's much-diminished territory by subjugating Mongolia, Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, Burma, and other former dependencies. They carried on a trade with the Russians by land, and by sea with the Portuguese, British, and Americans, whose first ship reached China in 1784. This commerce was limited to the port of Canton and was hampered by many restrictions. It is through this port that the immigration from China to the West has largely come, and much of the merchandise. The style of the goods imported from there has given the general public in the West the impression that the pictorial art of China consists solely of bright if harmonious colors, a tame sense of form, and a monotonous repetition of conventions. Such are in reality comparatively worthless productions made in Canton for the European market, and have nothing to do with the main stream of Chinese art.

The policy of isolation was gradually modified, and under certain restrictions Europeans were welcomed at the court of the early Ch'ing emperors who displayed much curiosity as to European civilization. Some West-



PAINTING OF A LADY

Ming



ern painters were even attached to the court and encouraged to paint in the Western manner.

While painting, on the whole, maintained the same level as during the Ming Dynasty, it was marked by the names of a few great painters. Porcelains, on the other hand, at least in our Western estimation, reached their zenith during this dynasty. Marvelous technical dexterity characterized the reigns of K'ang Hsi, Yung Chêng, and Ch'ien Lung. Ornamentation was carried to the extreme of delicacy. With the close of the eighteenth century the tendency of the times was reflected in a decline of the art.

In 1912 the Manchus gave place to the Republic of China, and a period of more or less constant civil war has followed. So far no distinctive art movement has arisen.

A brief and picturesquely contrasting summary of the cultural developments of China and Europe is given by Dr. Gowen when he says: 'That marvelous people which had already fashioned a policy through the experience of generations, if we may trust ancient traditions, when Hammurabi was making laws for the infant state of Babylon, which was producing its greatest literature when Romulus and Remus were founding the city of Rome; which was sending forth learned monks to collect the literary treasures of India when Picts and Britons were fighting for mastery and Saxon pirates were harrying the coasts which Rome had left unguarded; which was receiving Christian missionaries from Persia and Syria at the time when Ethelbert and his fellow princes were listening to the news brought by Augustine and Paulinus; which was making the most advanced experi-

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ments in socialism when Norman William was asserting his claim to the throne of Harold; the last dynasty was well-nigh a century and a half old when the American Republic was born.'

## CHAPTER IV

### GREAT PAINTERS AND THEIR WORK

CHINA has a definite art tradition reaching back to the twelfth century B.C.; but no examples of her painting are extant, so far as we know, earlier than the fifth century A.D. There is, of course, always the possibility that one of the many excavations being carried on in China proper or her dependencies may reveal earlier examples than these. Legend ascribes the origin of painting to B.C. 2700; the historians claiming that painting and writing came into existence at the same time. Dr. H. A. Giles, in his 'Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art,' cites a mention of portraiture in Chinese literature as early as B.C. 1326. But references to painting as an art are not at all common until the second and third centuries.

The earliest Chinese painting extant at the present time, if we omit the anonymous religious paintings, and the paintings on mortuary ceramics, is the *Nü shih chén t'u*, 'Instructions to the Ladies of the Palace,' or as it is more usually translated 'Admonitions of the Instructress in the Palace,' attributed to Ku K'ai-chih of the fourth century A.D., now in the British Museum. This painting is a series of illustrations for the text of a third-century scholar. Its authenticity has never been satisfactorily established, some scholars believing it an original by Ku K'ai-chih, and others holding that it is a T'ang copy made from the original. In either case it was undoubtedly done by a

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master artist, and serves as a landmark in Chinese painting. It is a series of pictures for the emperor and his family, who are portrayed in one of the scenes, illustrating well-known stories and precepts, especially those relating to the virtues and good deeds of noble women. In the script accompanying the paintings, one character refers to a custom followed by the ancient painters when portraying the emperor, thus intimating that there was already a long line of traditional subjects and methods of portraying them.

According to Chinese records there were a host of painters of note during the fifth and sixth centuries, almost more than there were years to the credit of the Six Dynasties. The painting of Ku K'ai-chih, however, granting its authenticity, is the sole example of their large output that has come down to us. The complete mastery shown in it presupposes not a couple but many centuries of evolution in the art of painting. Of the many painters of this period three names particularly stand out: Ku K'ai-chih, Hsieh Ho, a figure-painter and the formulator of the Six Canons, Chang Sêng-yu, who was renowned for his dragons and Buddhist paintings and is ranked among the greatest.

From this time on Buddhism became a powerful stimulus to the art of China, influencing not only her sculpture, but also her painting. A number of the Indian priests who came to China at this time seem to have been artists.

With the rise of the T'ang Dynasty, A.D. 618-906, the first of the main great epochs of Chinese painting began; but our knowledge of its art is mostly literary, as very few authenticated examples have been preserved

with the exception of those that Sir Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot found in Tun-huang, many of which are of recognized artistic merit. They are practically all Buddhist in form and subject. They give us a fairly good conception of the religious art of the times but little of the secular. Nor can the name of any of the great Chinese artists of the period be associated with them.

The art of the T'ang was a conscious effort to unite calligraphy with painting. The painters strove to express through their brush-work the life-communicating power of line, and to suggest the living forms of reality and rhythmic beauty, such as the masterly writers of the preceding centuries had given to their beautifully formed ideographs.

Wu Tao-tzü is conceded to have been the master painter of this period, and indeed of all Chinese art. He was born in the first part of the eighth century a little way from the capital, then at Lo-yang, in Honan. The historian describes his youth as that of a poverty-stricken orphan endowed by divine nature, who before he reached manhood had flooded the capital with his works. His genius soon drew the attention of the emperor, and he was given a post at court. About 780 he painted his famous portrait of General Li (mentioned in a previous chapter). According to the descriptions of the picture, the result was so remarkable that he was said to have had the aid of the gods in its execution.

He is credited with having painted over three hundred frescoes on the walls of temples using a great prodigality of detail and an almost overpowering realism, and displaying great richness of imagination. Many of his frescoes were inked-in sketches, and though later gener-

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ations preferred color in their frescoes, his are said to have been so great that none dared add to them. 'His dragons shook the air; his men and women breathed, charmed, awed, ennobled.' His most famous painting was the 'Death of Buddha,' of which more than one version (later copies) has come down to us. We know by descriptions in Chinese books, and by paintings in his design now in existence in Japan, something of its general appearance. There is a painting in the British Museum founded on this latter conception, showing saints, disciples, kings, queens, priests, warriors, angels, beasts of field and forest, all creation, in short, in an ecstasy of lamentation. Another great painting of his, if we may trust to the literary description of it, was that of Buddha among his ten disciples.

The usual number of miraculous legends are associated with his work, designed to express the admiration the Chinese felt for the life-likeness of his art: of dragons that were covered with mist when it rained, of pictures that came to life, and of even his own departure from earth by walking into a temple in one of his landscapes.

He painted in two manners: in his youth he is said to have used a thin brush, but to have changed to a great thick brush in middle age. According to the descriptions of his work, it was not so much the wealth of detail that struck the beholder as the extraordinary effects of his masterly brush-work. His greatness lay even more, however, in the sweep of his conception and the fertility of his imaginative realism. His style must be reconstructed from literary evidence to a large extent. Su Tung-po says of his figure work, 'Wu Tao-tzu's figures might have been drawn as shadows on a wall. They seem to

walk out of the picture and back into it; they project, can be seen from each side. The flat planes and tilted angles fit into one another as though by a natural geometrical law.' Tung Yü, a twelfth-century writer, still further reveals the three dimensional realisms of his work. He says 'They are like sculpture, when he paints a face, the cheek bones project, the nose is fleshy, the eyes hollow, the cheeks dimpled. But these effects are not got by heavy ink shading. The shape of the features seems to come spontaneously, yet inevitably.' All writers upon his technique, while greatly admiring his originality, lay great stress on the traditional character of his art and the fact that he never violated the classic canons.

The range of his subjects was very wide, and he excelled in all of them: human figures, religious subjects, birds and animals, vegetation and landscapes.

So far as we know there is no authenticated painting by him in existence, though it is said that as late as the twelfth century there were ninety-three authenticated ones in the Imperial collection. (Pelliot believes these were forgeries made to meet the demands of the Emperor for paintings of the old masters.) His paintings were so much admired that copies were engraved on stone; the Field Museum, the Louvre, the Musée Guimet and the British Museum, all have stone-rubbings which, there is every reason to believe, are plausible copies in so far as the outlines are concerned. (As the color work was lost, the coloring used by the later artists who copied these rubbings was entirely supplied by their imaginations.) During the Sung Dynasty his work was often confused with that of Ku K'ai-chih.

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During this T'ang period landscape-painting rose to popular favor, and two different manners of treatment developed, dividing it into the Northern and Southern schools, a division that persisted into the Sung Dynasty. The Northern school was led by Li Ssü-hsün and the Southern by Wang Wei.

Wang Wei was a physician and was even more noted as a poet than a painter. He was born in A.D. 699 and spent many years of his life in high official positions. He was eventually carried off by a powerful rebel chieftain and held in captivity for a number of years. When he was freed, he retired to his birthplace and spent the rest of his life in writing poetry, painting, and enjoying music. Like so many others of his time he was a devout Buddhist. The peace of these years is reflected in his paintings, many of which portray the scenes of his birthplace. He died in 759.

He was the father of what is known as the literary man's painting, in which the naturalistic element was discarded for a soft and vague idealism.

We are told that his pictures were full of thought and rivaled even Nature herself, and that his ideas 'transcended the bounds of mortality.' He left copious notes on his own method of painting. He was criticized for taking liberties with reality and combining incongruous features in one picture, such as the flowers belonging to the different seasons, or presenting a banana tree in snow, an audacious defiance of Nature according to many critics. The usual number of legends surround his name.

The difference between these two schools is rather a matter of technique and attitude of mind than of geo-

graphy. The Northern School, following Li Ssü-hsün, painted in full color, the Southern in subdued tones. As the years passed, the differences became still more marked. The adherents of the Southern School in the Sung period valued elegance, charm, and good taste as essential, regarding a deep display of feeling as almost ill-bred. The Northern gradually gave up the heavy blues, green and gold outlines of Li Ssü-hsün, and developed a style of bold monochrome and impressionistic, tinted sketch. Chao Po-chü, Chao-chü, Li T'ang, Kuo Hsi, Ma Yüan, and Hsia Kuei were some of the famous painters who followed the Northern School; while Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung, Tung Yüan, Fan K'uan, the elder and the younger Mi, Chü-jan, Li Lung-mien, Wang Chin-ch'ing, Huang Tzü-chih, and Wu Chung-kuei were followers of Wang Wei's 'literary school.'

Three hundred painters of the T'ang Dynasty left their names and records to posterity. Yen Li-pêñ and his brother Yen Li-tê who were famous for their paintings of foreigners; the Khotanese, Wei-ch'ih I-sêng; Li Ssü-hsün, the founder of the Northern School, and his son Li Chao-tao; Pien Luan and Han Kan, were among the most important.

Han Kan was a master of great repute. He began life as a pot-boy at an inn patronized by Wang Wei. He was in the habit of drawing pictures of men and horses in the dust, and Wang Wei is said to have seen them and to have been so much impressed by them that he gave the boy the needed financial aid to perfect himself. Han Kan became a skilled painter not only of horses, a subject that won him his greatest renown, but also of portraits and religious subjects. He and Chao Mêng-fu of

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the Yüan Dynasty are the greatest horse painters that China has ever produced. It has been the custom to attribute innumerable paintings to them that are most obviously by other brushes.

Among the painters of lesser note were Chang Hsiao-shih whose conception of the Buddhist Hell is said to have been used as a model by Wu Tao-tzü, Yang Chêng, a painter of portraits and landscapes, Lu Lêng-chieh, a pupil of Wu Tao-tzü, and Yang T'ing-kuang who painted in the style of the same master, Chang Hsüan, noted for his paintings of women, Wei Wu-t'ien, a painter of animals as was Ch'êng Hung, Ts'ao Pa, who was almost as great a painter of horses as Han Kan, the two painters of Buddhist subjects Ch'êng Tao-chêng and Chou Fang, and Wei Yen the painter of pine trees.

The greatness of the T'ang period, with its pushing out of frontiers, its luxurious living, and its vivid delight in life is reflected in the art of the time. It is comparable in its psychology to that period in Europe when the Renaissance and the discovery of the New World, with its endless possibilities for adventure, fired the minds of England, France, Spain, and Italy to new creative endeavor. It, too, had its great epoch of poetry — a lyric, not a dramatic one such as Europe produced. The artist used brilliant color, strong sweeping lines, and his subjects pulsed with life. Buddhism had taken hold of the nation, and expressed itself in a simple, unphilosophical and unanalytical faith that found reflection in the painter's art. He polished his æstheticism on the whetstone of religion as it were.

With the downfall of the T'ang Dynasty there followed a period of anarchy known as the 'Five Dynas-

ties' or 'Late T'ang,' which closely approximated the T'ang so far as the style of the work is concerned. This short period of some sixty years produced, according to Chinese records, over two hundred painters, but none of the foremost rank.

With the rise of the Sung Dynasty, the psychology of the nation changed. The T'ang was a time of action when men's minds were occupied with objective matters; while the Sung was a period of reflection and deep thought, analyzation, and scientific experiment. These two widely different modes of thought, of course, were reflected in the artistic expression of their times. It made that of the Sung mystical, introspective, philosophical, with great refinement of detail though still virile.

Li Kung-lin, or Li Lung-mien, to use his popular name, was the outstanding figure of the Sung period just as Wu Tao-tzü was of the T'ang. He had great versatility and painted a wide range of subjects with equal power. His paintings were in different manners at different times, as he had much the same experimental type of mind that Leonardo da Vinci displayed in his work. This characteristic has led to a great deal of confusion in attributing pictures to his brush. In his youth he painted horses extensively, while in later years he turned to religious subjects, due, it is said, to the rebuke of a Buddhist priest. In 1100 he retired from official life, after thirty years of service, and spent the remaining six years of his life at the 'Hill of the Sleeping Dragon,' from which he took his name of Li Lung-mien. As has been noted elsewhere, he was very fond of copying the old masters, and is said to have often referred to these copies for matters of technique.

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There is a great divergence in the Chinese and Japanese traditions about his work. The Japanese attribute to his brush a number of paintings of Lohans, magnificent in color and design, while the Chinese say he never painted in color except when he was copying old masterpieces. According to the latter, he produced ink-paintings or monochromes, in fine sensitive lines, small in scale, and somewhat intricate rather than broad in design. (This latter view is the one generally accepted by Western scholars.)

Another painter of high repute of that period was Mu-ch'i, a Buddhist priest whose work was considered unpleasing and coarse by the Chinese critics of the day. The majority of it found its way to Japan where it is greatly treasured. He is now, however, recognized in China as a great painter in monochrome, and is especially celebrated for his wild geese, storks, monkeys, and Buddhist figures.

Kuo Hsi, a landscape painter, is almost more noted for his treatise on painting than for his pictures, though these are of the first rank. His biographers say he was most famous for his portrayals of forests in winter, and that he was probably the first to use pure landscape for solid mural work.

Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan were the preëminent landscape painters of the Sung Dynasty; they both belonged to the Northern Sung School as did Kuo Hsi. To Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan is attributed a great break in technique with the past, that of introducing disguised outlines and rough contours.

Mi Fei made a new departure in landscape, using a form which he himself called 'ink-play.' He painted

with a fully charged brush that gave extraordinary richness. He seems to have been a great deal of an eccentric and signed his paintings in various ways. This adds greatly to our confusion in attempting to establish the authenticity of the many paintings attributed to him, as did his fondness for copying the old masters.

Of equal beauty is the work of Ma Yüan, and in a lesser degree that of his so-called son, Ma Lin.

Sung Art reached its zenith and began its descent under the art-loving emperor, Hui Tsung. The founding of the Academy of Painting and Calligraphy, *T'u Hua Yüan*, is usually ascribed to Li Hou-chu, a ruler of the fragmentary South T'ang Empire. When China was reunited under the Sungs, the painters of the various little local courts thronged to the Sung capital. Hui Tsung did not permit this academy to remain merely a part of the Literary College, but organized it into a department of state of equal importance. Examinations in painting were instituted, modeled as closely as possible upon literary examinations, and themes were set by the examiners and discussed by the candidates pictorially instead of in writing. It is said that the Emperor Hui Tsung often gave a line of poetry to the painters, and expected them to illustrate it. It was from this custom of his that the saying arose that 'A poem is a picture and a picture is a poem.' Painting became in fact a new branch of literature.

Though the emperor instructed the painters of the Academy to draw from life, and life only, their technique soon ossified and the influence of the Academy became purely academic, all originality stifled. The Academy

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fell into disrepute during the Ming Dynasty, and the original system of examination into desuetude. Its traditions through subsequent centuries became detrimental rather than helpful to Chinese art.

While certain great masters were connected with the Academy, it was usually only as officers appointed by imperial favor in recognition of their talents and not as students. The students were chiefly drawn from the ranks of disappointed literary men or persons of artistic tastes who had not acquired a liberal education. They did, however, much creditable work, many examples of which can be seen in our Western museums.

Whether the Emperor Hui Tsung was the great painter he is reputed to have been by Chinese critics, or whether the works ascribed to him simply bear his seal and signature as an art patron, as certain Western scholars are disposed to believe, Chinese art owes him a great debt as patron and collector. He accumulated enormous quantities of books, bronzes, and *objets de vertu*. The greater part of this collection is thought to have been destroyed when the Kin Tartars captured K'ai-fêng in 1127 and carried the emperor himself away captive. It had a profound influence on the artists of the period; and its tradition has had an almost equal influence on subsequent generations. His son reorganized the government in the South, and for a few years more the Sung traditions were carried on.

One of the profound influences in Sung art was the teachings of the Zen or Ch'an sect of Buddhism. It taught what may be called idealistic contemplation, regarding Nature as a storehouse of spiritual laws. It held that man and Nature were two parallel expressions of

the same thing, and that the perfect life was to be found only in solitary contemplation of the Universe as it expressed itself through the glories of the sunset and the blossoming of a flower. It joined hands with the somewhat similar Nature teachings of the Taoists, and the two together produced the great landscapes for which Chinese art is famous.

During the Sung period what was called ‘painting without bones,’ meaning without first drawing an outline, came into use.

When the Sung Dynasty fell before the more virile Mongols, the Chinese could no longer use their energies in the affairs of government, and their powers found an outlet in the arts. The Mongols, following their policy of fostering the arts of the countries they had subdued, persuaded the Chinese artists to return from the retirement into which they had withdrawn on the downfall of the Sungs, and to frequent the court again. The most celebrated of these was Chao Mêng-fu, a member of the Sung family. He was summoned to the court by Kublai Khan in 1286 and soon became a favorite of the emperor. The Mongols, being nomads, were very fond of horses, and the art of the horse-painter was revived. Chao Mêng-fu excelled in this medium, and stands only second to Han Kan of the T'ang Dynasty. He like Han Kan has had, at one time or another, most of the paintings of horses in Chinese art attributed to him, and has been equally the victim of the copyist and the forger. As he painted in more than one style, certain critics are taking the stand that he was not a horse-painter at all.

This Yüan Dynasty produced many painters of note

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in spite of its short duration: the landscapists Ma K'uei, Jén Yüeh-shan, Shêng Mou, and Ni Yün-lin, the animal-painters Chao Tan-lin and Ch'ien Shun-chü, who was also noted for his flowers, Wang Jo-shui, another flower-painter, and the great painter of immortals, Yen Hui.

Yüan painting was marked by a naturalism to which the late Sung had already been tending before it closed.

In 1368 the Mongols were expelled, and the first Ming emperor mounted the throne. The Chinese divide the art of this dynasty into two periods. The first which extended down to the end of the fifteenth century, followed the Sung traditions and produced an art scarcely less great than that of the Sung period itself. In the second period there was a change of mood; the lofty idealism of the past gave place to a more luxurious temper, one delighting in external magnificence. Monochrome, which certain painters of the Yüan Dynasty had still practiced and which was very popular with a few of the early Ming painters, foremost among them Lin Liang and Wu Wei, was superseded by sensuous charm of color, while composition itself became complicated, giving a tame effect, despite the numerous scenes brought together in one picture. This style found its highest expression in Lü Chi. His typical coloring was rich and opaque and concentrated on a few strong strokes. There was less modulation of tone, and the compositions became more decorative than interpretative. Ch'iu Ying crystallized these tendencies toward elaboration and ornateness. One of his favorite subjects was the daily life and occupations of the men and women of the court.

T'ang Yin, his contemporary, also excelled in the

presentation of women, though he painted excellent landscapes as well. He is considered by many the greatest painter of this period.

Other painters of this era whose work is in the foremost rank are the bird and flower painters Lu Chih and Lü Chi, Ting Yün-p'êng, Shên Chou, Tai Chin, and Wen Chêng-ming.

While the traditional subjects of sages, landscapes, birds, and flowers were not neglected, genre paintings such as games of polo, the games and occupations of children, festivals of various kinds such as the feast of the tombs, the tea-cup ceremony, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the domestic occupations of women became popular. From this period also date many of the fine ancestral portraits.

This is the first period of Chinese art from which a sufficient number of examples have come down to us to permit us to study the art of the time with accuracy. What has survived from other periods convinces us that the art of the Ming deserves only a secondary place. It was characterized by the pedantry and conservatism that has been the undermining weakness of Chinese civilization in various epochs.

In 1644 the Ming court, internally corrupted by the ascendancy of eunuchs (to whom the Chinese historian is accustomed to ascribe the overthrow of each succeeding dynasty), was threatened by a rebel army it had called to its aid, the Manchu Tartars. They seized Peking and overthrew the Ming rule, setting up a dynasty of their own known as the Ch'ing.

The emperors of this dynasty, like those of the Yüan, were patrons of Chinese art, but their interest was

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centered in ceramics rather than in painting. The Emperor Ch'ien Lung formed an imperial collection scarcely second in importance to that of Hui Tsung. A number of painters of ability carried on the stream of ancient Chinese art, the four Wangs, Yün Shou-p'ing, Wu Li — all of the Kang-Hsi period — Pien Shou-mien, Jên Ponien, and Hsü Ku. Wu Ch'ang-shih, Wu Shih-hsien, and the two women, Wu Chih-ying and Wu Hsing-fen, are carrying on the traditions to-day. The works of this Ch'ing Dynasty have been regarded by some European scholars as distinctly inferior to those of the immediately preceding dynasties. The Chinese critics, however, do not seem to take this gloomy view, nor does Dr. Freidrich Hirth, who devoted more time to the subject than the average Western critic. In his opinion: 'The better masters of the Ming and the present-day dynasty [Ch'ing] may not come up to those of the preceding periods, yet they have created excellent works.'

Interesting side-lights are thrown on the technique used by the various painters in some of the legends that have become attached to their names and in the comments in the numerous treatises on painting. There are innumerable stories, in slightly varying versions, attached to the names of successive generations of painters testifying to their realistic ability — stories of dragons so real that they flew away, of portraits coming to life, or animals that ran away or carried travelers, and even of buildings that opened miraculously to shelter the painter himself. Of more technical significance is the story of Ku K'ai-chih who never painted in the eyes of his subject until sometime after the painting had been finished. The omission of the eyes by the early Chinese

painter may, of course, have been due to the superstition common among early peoples that a picture or image had a life of its own, and that the representing of the eye endowed it with this life. On the other hand there is the more plausible reason (from an artist's viewpoint) which Wu Tao-tzü is alleged to have given as the one why he himself left the painting in of the eye until his pictures were nearly finished — that it interfered with his attaining the likeness.

There are many stories of the careful observation required from the painter, notably illustrated by the memory test that Wu Tao-tzü subjected himself to when he painted the scenery of the Chia-ling River at Ssüch'uan for the Emperor Ming Huang, without even a sketch note.

Much emphasis is placed in the various writings of the Chinese painters themselves on the psychological preparation necessary to attain the right mood to begin a painting. Attention was given to this mental preparation even in the early training of an art student. Kuo Hsi says in his treatise on painting: 'If a painter forces himself to work when he feels lazy, his productions will be weak and spiritless, without decision. This is because he cannot concentrate. If when he is feeling distracted and bothered, he decides to muddle through, his forms will be evasive and incomplete. This defect comes from lack of seriousness. If it is hurried or feverish, the composition will be rough and arbitrary; it will lack consistency. This defect comes from lack of reverent toil.'

## CHAPTER V CALLIGRAPHY

THE origin of Chinese painting is to be found in the beautiful symbols of their written characters. In the West writing is looked upon largely as a convenience; in China it is almost a religion. It has not been regarded merely as a means of recording thought, but as an art of expression co-equal with painting. It may also be said that the characters are designed rather than written. Specimens by the great calligraphers were treasured carefully and handed down from generation to generation. The training for one was quite as rigorous as for the other, as Paléologue points out, 'the very nature of Chinese writing imposes upon him who wishes to trace its characteristics as much study and training of eye and hand as painting demands. Strokes have a firmness, a flexibility, just such abrupt endings, graceful curves, sudden energies and graceful shadings as only a long practice of the use of the brush can give.'

Chinese is unique among the written languages of the world; it uses ideograms to express its ideas, not only accurately but artistically. The earliest inscriptions that have come down to us belong to the Shang Dynasty, B.C. 1766-1122 and were cut upon pieces of bone. Some of these had already traveled a long way from the pictograms in which it is claimed Chinese characters originated. By the time writing had developed far enough to use the stylus upon bamboo, it had evolved beautiful ideographs similar to designs. Such decora-

tive pictograms are seen in the characters on the Shang bronzes in the representations of the deer, the pig, and the dragon. With the introduction of the brush, centuries later, in the Ch'in (or T'sin) Dynasty, calligraphy for the first time took its place as an art. Its invention is traditionally ascribed to Mêng T'ien, a general of the Emperor Shih Huang, who was in charge of the building of the Great Wall. This discovery enabled the writer to shape ideographs with minute regard to thin and thick shadings of line. It is thought, too, to have marked the beginning of painting. The correct amount of 'strength' to be used in plying the brush was carefully studied. Ts'ai Yung of the second century A.D. left a series of rules known as the 'Nine Influences' that have played as important a part in the development of calligraphy as an art, as Hsieh Ho's 'Six Canons' have played in painting. The calligrapher used a brush of hog's hair and drew his characters on finely woven silk. With the freedom and pliancy of the wrist which the use of a brush instead of the rigid stylus gave, the archaic Chinese characters gradually lost their stiffness and took on the grace and decorative qualities for which they are still noted.

In chronological order, it is usual to divide calligraphy into four periods. The first is that of the ideographs as represented on the early bronze vessels; the second are seal characters, the third, official writing, by which is meant an official style in which the exact number of strokes has to be definitely and strictly adhered to; and the last is the model originated by Wang Hsi-chih in the fourth century, and which has been in continuous use ever since. To be sure Chang

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Kuai-kuan of the T'ang, one of the foremost authorities on calligraphy, subdivides these four until he had ten styles, but the four major divisions are the ones generally accepted. His differentiations are largely technical.

The modern style, as distinguished from the earlier *chuan* and *li*, is in itself subdivided into recognized modes, *chên* or regular, *hsing* or running, and the *ts'ao* or draft. In the regular, every character is written with precision so that each stroke is readily distinguished; while in the running, though the general outline of the character is distinguishable, the strokes are frequently abbreviated or combined. The draft is a sort of shorthand in which each writer is more or less of a law unto himself. All three require equal dexterity. A writer, however, may not excel in writing the regular characters yet be a model for the running or draft methods.

Three names stand out as preëminent in the long list of calligraphers of note, prior to the fifth century. Chang Chih of the first century A.D. is spoken of as the perfect writer of draft characters. He is said to have preferred to write beside a tiny pond and to have dipped his brush so often in the water that it turned black. The second is Chung Yu of the Wei Dynasty who used thin nervous yet strong strokes; and the third, and universally acknowledged as the greatest calligrapher of all ages, is Wang Hsi-chih. His brush-stroke is described as having been as light as a floating cloud and as vigorous as a startled dragon.

The most famous example of Wang Hsi-chih's script is known as the *Lan T'ing Hsü*. He was one of the celebrated group of the Bamboo Grove, and transcribed

the poems and discussions that the poets, his friends, wrote, thus insuring to them a lasting fame. His script is referred to again and again in poetry and literature; while the meetings that this group held have furnished subjects for endless paintings. Succeeding generations made numerous copies of his calligraphy, one of the best known being the *T'ang mo wang tzü fén la chih t'a pên* made in the T'ang Dynasty. The Emperor Liang Wu of the sixth century ordered that a 'Thousand Character Essay' be compiled from his works, and this essay in turn has been copied continually by subsequent generations. Indeed it figures even more frequently in the lists of famous scripts than any other subject except the *Lan T'ing Hsü* or 'Orchid Pavilion Preface' itself. It was used as a child's primer in the schools until the coming of the Republic changed the form of education of the nation.

The first artist to apply the cursive line to painting was Lu T'an-wei of the fifth century. He is said to have done for painting what Wang Hsi-chih did for calligraphy.

Though there was much interest in calligraphy as an art and it enjoyed imperial patronage, the T'ang Dynasty produced no great calligrapher. Ou-yang Hsün is only classed as a T'ang calligrapher because he died at the beginning of the T'ang Dynasty. The Chinese are accustomed to assign a man to the dynasty in which he dies, not to the one in which he lives.

The less peaceful times of the Sung produced two great writers. The first of these is Su Shih who is more frequently alluded to by his fancy name of 'Su Tung-po' ('Su of the Eastern Slope'). He was one of those gifted

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men whom China has so often produced, equally famous as a poet, essayist, painter, and calligrapher. The chief characteristics of his style were finish and elegance, and his most famous scripts are the 'Lotus Classic,' *Lien hua ching*, and his 'Thousand Character Classic.' The second, who is held in equal honor as a calligrapher and a painter, was Mi Fei. He piled ink on ink with strong nervous strokes, usually using paper rather than silk as it absorbed ink more readily without the danger of spreading. The Sung period had a greater number of good calligraphers than any other, though it was during this era that painting became divorced from calligraphy, and the new technique required by monochrome developed.

The Yüan Dynasty produced an equally brilliant calligrapher in Chao Mêng-fu, the distinguished painter of horses. He frequently wrote comments on the paintings of his wife, the Lady Kuan, who was scarcely less distinguished as a painter than he. There is an interesting script of his written on one of her paintings of bamboo in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He also wrote long comments on his own paintings. The intimate relation between painting and calligraphy is demonstrated by the frequency with which a painter wrote a poem descriptive of his painting in one corner of it, or an admirer put a comment upon the picture itself. Nor did the Chinese ever consider that such embellishment of the painting detracted from the composition. From their viewpoint, on the contrary, it enhanced its artistic worth.

The most famous Ming calligrapher was Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.



BAMBOO

By Lady Kuan of Yüan  
Calligraphy by her husband, Chao Meng-fu



These master calligraphers gave their names to certain styles of writing that were much admired and studied by succeeding generations. The intrinsic beauty of the ideogram unconsciously educated the artistic appreciation of the average student, and served as his only contact with the art of his country. Bronzes, jades, and paintings were only accessible to a fortunate few, for they were shut away in private collections, but reproductions of the great scripts were used as copy-books for the pupils in the smallest hamlets in the country, and embodied in themselves the inspiration of a great art production.

Not only was the calligrapher and painter closely akin in the brush they used, but the paper, silk, and ink used by one was equally employed by the other. In the West, on the contrary, the materials employed for writing are totally different from those used in painting: paper, ink, and a pen as opposed to canvas, oil, and a brush. An exhaustive study was made in China of the qualities of the materials used. The brushes were carefully selected from the finest bristles obtainable, and were made in a large variety of sizes and qualities. Each brush point was protected by a shield that fitted over it much as the cap does on our modern fountain-pens.

The silk and paper to be used were, too, as carefully studied. The invention of paper is ascribed to Ts'ai Lun, in the first century after Christ. Various calligraphers and painters preferred different types of paper, and many had special kinds made for their work. According to the records that have come down to us, Wei Shih of the fourth century preferred a bamboo pulp paper with a rough surface over which a loosely woven

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mesh was placed, while Wu Tao-tzü used a thick, rough-surfaced hemp paper that shows the hemp fibers under the microscope. The Five Dynasties and the Sung used a fine white paper, thin and smooth of surface. This was the finest form of paper ever produced in China. The Ming paper deteriorated and was much inferior in quality. It is the quality still in use to-day.

Silk, however, was more used by the great painters than paper, though Li Lung-mien is said to have preferred paper for his own work and to have used silk only for his copies of the great masters. Mi Fei and Ch'ao Mêng-fu also are said to have used paper for their best work.

Until comparatively recently little was known of the silks prior to the T'ang period, but excavations in Tun-huang and Mongolia have given us excellently preserved earlier specimens, some dating as far back as the Han Dynasty. T'ang silk was of two kinds, a coarse weave and a beaten silk in which the spaces between the fibers had been closed by beating with a stick on a polished stone. Sung silk had a double strand for both warp and woof, or a double warp and a single woof. A coarser silk is said to have been made especially for the use of the Academy, and was known as 'Academy silk.' It was woven in various widths, some as wide as eight feet. A great number of the paintings surviving from this period are on this silk, particularly the copies of the great masters. Yüan silk was practically the same except for the double strand. Ming silk was woven with a single coarse strand in both warp and woof, and was rather similar to that of the T'ang except that it was more closely woven.

The ink used was soot-black; it was modified by succeeding generations, the Sung being jet black and glossy, the Ming lacking depth of color and glossiness. In the same way the vegetables and minerals used for the color pigments improved with succeeding generations or lost their quality as the art of China declined. The Sung blues, the Ming copper reds and the T'ang cerulean (blue) stand out as paramount.

A thorough study of the materials used in Chinese paintings, with a scientific analysis of the components of the inks and paints used, that is now being made, may in time enable us to date the paintings and calligraphy more accurately than we are able to do at present. While it is quite possible that an early Ming painting might have been done on Sung silk, the probability that the ink, too, would also be Sung is very slight. This method will probably be used to supplement the evidence of the seals, signatures, and attestations.

The placing of seals upon various scripts and paintings by collectors adds greatly to their value in the eyes of the connoisseurs. They, however, are of slight value in authenticating a doubtful painting as they are even more easily forged than the picture itself.

Calligraphy, perhaps more than any one other force, has been the means of stabilizing the civilization of China. Bertrand Russell calls attention to the fact that with us a word represents a sound, while with the Chinese a word represents an idea. What is written in Chinese characters can be read throughout China in spite of different dialects that are mutually unintelligible and amount almost to distinct languages. Even a Japanese without knowing a word of spoken Chinese,

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can read Chinese script. This characteristic makes it possible for a Chinese to read the classics in their original form, though the spoken language has changed as much as current French has from its parent Latin. In a similar manner, though to a less degree, painting may be said to speak a universal language that every scholar can read through its symbolism.

The admiration one scholar had for the writing of another is vividly described in a poem by Liang T'ing-shu on the writing of Li Po-hai, as translated by Florence Ayscough:

‘The writing of Li Po-hai  
Is like the vermillion bird,  
And the blue-green dragon.  
It drifts slowly as clouds drift;  
It has the wide swiftness of the wind,  
Hidden within it lurk the dragon and the tiger.’

Or as the old Chinese philosopher once phrased it, the ‘handwriting is the portrait of the mind’ and reflects its traits.

Sung Lien, editor of the history of the Yüan Dynasty and a writer of authority on archæology and art, describes the functions of the two arts of calligraphy and painting thus: ‘without writing there could have been no record of fact, without painting no presentation of form. These two are roads, which follow different routes and yet lead to the same goal.’

## CHAPTER VI

### FIGURE-PAINTING

BOTH with us and with the Chinese, figure-painting, *jēn wu*, was the first form of the painter's art to reach its zenith. We still continue to look upon it as the highest point that art can reach. According to our view, it gives the fullest possible scope to a painter's abilities and imagination. We see in it the great human drama, the concrete and personal assertion of man's importance, of his having been made in the image of the Creator. Not so the Chinese artist. For him the highest expression of art can only be found in the impersonality of landscape-painting.

The Greeks studied the human body, both for itself and as the abode of the spirit; they joyed in portraying the nude figure in every possible posture, employing it as a medium for their spiritual teachings. Even their gods were portrayed in this manner, and much license was allowed the artist in his imaginings. This led to what writers of late are terming narcissism, or humanity's worship of itself. Christianity, with its belief that man was made in the likeness of God, still further intensified this feeling of man's superiority to the rest of creation, and opened a vast chasm between him and the other manifestations of Nature.

In the course of the centuries what has been called the 'spiritual significance of the human form' has been lost, and the portrayal of the body became an end in itself. We regard the human form as our noblest and

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most expressive symbol, the proud assertion of our personality. Our attitude is well expressed by Berenson: 'The human figure must be the principal material out of which the graphic and plastic arts are constructed. Every visible thing should be subordinated to man and submitted to his standards.' The painter Kenyon Cox embodies the Western conception even more graphically: 'The subject for the exercise of the greatest powers of a painter is the human figure, nude or so draped as to express its structure and movement.'

The Chinese approach to the subject is the exact antithesis of this. They looked upon man as merely one of the innumerable manifestations of Nature. They were quite content to play the humble part assigned them in the cosmic scheme — a part, by the way, that modern science is rapidly demonstrating as the only tenable one — and did not waste their energies in trying to make that part seem more important than it is. The Chinese mind considers that: 'Every being in the world, every manifestation of nature, every spirit, every god is an active part of the whole, of that great reality which is behind and beyond the flow of phenomena,' to quote from *I Ching*, a book said to have been written by the Duke of Chou nearly three thousand years ago.

The achievements, desires, glory, and sufferings of man have always been the central theme of Western art; while in Chinese the continuity of the universe, whether expressed in a flower, a bird, a tree, a man, or a mountain, was the goal for which the artist strove. His purpose was to lead us out from ourselves into the universal and toward the Infinite.

Both Confucianism and Taoism contributed toward

this attitude, the latter with its emphasis on Nature, and the former with its emphasis on the subordination of the individual. Confucius like Plato held that art should serve the state, and should kindle and sustain the patriotic virtues. He placed particular emphasis on filial piety. A Chinese child draws it in with his first breath, expresses it by service so long as his parents live, and continues it after death in ancestor worship. He enlarged upon these teachings until they applied even to the state. He says in his 'Canons of Filial Piety': 'The first thing filial duty requires of us is that we carefully preserve from all injury and in a perfect state the bodies we have received from our parents. . . . We should regulate our conduct by correct principles so as to transmit our names to future generations and reflect glory on our parents. Thus it commences in attention to parents, is continued through services rendered to the prince, and is completed by an elevation of ourselves.'

His teachings fostered the development of figure-painting, especially the portrayal in both paintings and carvings of the great men who had gone before, in order that they might furnish to each successive generation stimulating and ennobling examples. The Chinese believe that example is more powerful than precept. They have dotted their country with shrines to the ennobled dead which the foreigner often mistakes for temples with their gods. So, too, have they commemorated their deeds by innumerable paintings recalling certain incidents in their lives. They portrayed thus sages, poets, great religious teachers, emperors and empresses, heroes and heroines who had conferred some great gift or benefit on the Chinese nation.

Chang Yen-yüan, the art historian of the ninth century, states the mission of painting thus: 'Painting perfects education, aids morality, explains to us the operation of the spirit, helps us to penetrate the mysteries of Nature. It shares the merits of the Six Scriptures and potency of the Four Seasons. It proceeds not from effort but from Nature.'

The first definite mention we have of portraiture is in B.C. 1326; but it is not until the second and third centuries B.C. that these references become at all frequent. The bas-reliefs found in Han tombs are thought by some scholars to be engraved copies of paintings owned by the dead during their lifetime, and to give a good idea of the mythological and historical subjects used at that time, and their treatment. From the early written records, also, it may be gathered that it was the custom for the emperor to order a portrait painted of some minister as a means of honoring him. Such paintings were done upon the walls of halls set aside for this purpose, 'halls of fame,' as we would call them now. This custom is said to have caused much political intriguing among the courtiers in their desire to have members of their families included in these halls of honorary portraits.

Although portraiture was so common, no examples of it are now known to be extant before the fourth century. The Chinese looked upon portraiture as a composite art, an amalgamation of picture making and biography. Carlyle seems to have taken a somewhat similar view when he said, 'Often I have found a portrait superior in instruction to a dozen written biographies.' The Chinese held that a literal reproduction of the features never fully revealed the character of the subject, but that the

painter must use what to-day would be called psychological clairvoyance in order to reveal the sitter's soul.

His portraits were consequently never a transcription of the features of the subject but rather a composite picture of what he thought the essence of the man to be, founded on his knowledge of his life, and lighted by his imaginative insight. Our nearest approach to his method is the one we employ in our portrayal of saints and other legendary characters. If he painted a person still living, as some of the earlier masters did, he did it from a series of memory studies. He never drew direct from the sitter or a model (dressed to represent the historical character) as is the custom with our artists. The only time a portrait was painted direct from the subject was when an ancestral portrait was being made.

These portraits are not placed against a background filled with furniture and other objects, nor yet against a landscape, but upon a plain background with nothing to distract from the figure itself. Even the earth on which it stands is not sketched in. Yet the onlooker is unaware of these deficiencies (to our Western eyes) so firmly do the figures tread and so powerful is the presentation. Also in spite of his lack of knowledge of anatomy in our Western sense of that word, the Chinese artist never failed to put the body — with a complete sense of its bony structure — under the garments with which the figure is clothed.

Some of the painters who won fame in this line were Ch'én Hung and Chou Fang — a fine portrait of Lao Tzü formerly attributed to the latter is in the Freer Gallery in Washington — both of the T'ang Dynasty; Li-ang K'ai of the Sung; and Jên Yüeh-shan of the Yüan.

Portraiture as a great art may be said to have declined with the Sung.

The ancestral portrait which is much sought after by Western collectors and likened by them to the Holbeins, the Franz Hals, and other great character studies of our old masters, is never included in their art collections by the Chinese. It is considered a part of the ancestral worship and is treasured solely for that purpose.

It is hung directly over the coffin during the funeral ceremonies, and is supposed to be inhabited by the spirit of the departed during the service. After the burial, it is carefully stored in the private ancestral hall or in one of the community places called *Tzü T'ang*, which are built for the common use of the families of the same clan. It is not brought out again except during the first six days of the year, when all ancestral portraits in the possession of the family are hung and reverence paid them.

These *Ta Shou*, as they are called, are the only paintings the Chinese ever make directly from the model. They are painted either in the old age of the subject, or if he or she dies young—for it must be understood that the mother is as much included in ancestor worship as the father—in the three days before the burial. The artist makes a careful sketch of the face, completing the figure at his leisure. This face has to be an absolute likeness, for according to the Chinese belief the spirit of the subject must be able to recognize it as a representation of itself when the portrait is hung during the ceremonies of ancestral worship. The bodies of both men and women are always stiffly placed, full face to the on-looker, the feet conventionally resting on a teakwood



ANCESTRAL PORTRAIT

Ming



stool, the hands in the lap. The costume selected is usually the ceremonial robes of the man if he is a viceroy or other official, or in the case of a woman, her red bridal-dress or a robe denoting her husband's official rank. Many of the best examples of these date from the Ming Dynasty.

The ancestral portrait was seldom if ever made by an artist of note but by what might be called the artisan painter. It constituted a special profession in itself. To our Western trained eyes, however, these portraits are works of art, worthy to rank with the best Western art has to offer in portraiture.

According to Confucian ethics the empire was one vast brotherhood, recognizing mutual duties, over which the emperor exercised a parental authority based on the consent and choice of the people. Innumerable paintings were made to recall the ethics of this brotherhood or to remind the emperor of his duties. Historical events were given a larger significance than the particular happening itself. They seldom commemorated a great battle, a signing of a peace treaty, or the coronation of a sovereign. The stories they told were more personal in their application to the life of the observer. A very popular subject was the one portrayed in 'Domestic Training,' a painting of the Yüan Dynasty, various versions of which are in both the Metropolitan and the Freer Gallery in Washington.

Other traditional subjects were the 'Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup,' the group of congenial friends celebrated by the poet Tu Fu; the return of Chih Wen-chi from captivity; the gatherings at Lan T'ing; 'Home Again,' the return of the official who got so homesick

that he threw up his post and returned to his family; Hsieh An playing chess, the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove; the Great Yü draining the Great Flood; and a host of mythological themes. The number of such subjects with a nation of so long a history, and of so vivid an imagination, is limitless, and it is possible to suggest only a few of the more common.

The use of such historical and mythological material is not confined, of course, to the Eastern painter. In the West we have Rembrandt's 'Saint Paul in Prison,' Velasquez's 'Burning Bush,' and such classic Greek scenes as the 'Burning of Troy,' the 'Birth of Venus'; and Turner's 'Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba' and his 'Dido Building Carthage,' as well as hosts on purely historical themes.

A more intimate subject and one much beloved of the Chinese artist was that of the ethical and manners paintings, portraying everyday life. Some of these pictured the occupations of a gentleman — the 'Seven Fine Arts' of calligraphy, painting, playing *wei-ch'i*, playing the *ch'in* or table-lute, writing poetry, drinking wine (as an epicure does, for its flavor), and arranging flowers. Such paintings in Western collections are usually entitled 'Occupations of the Philosophers.' Both the Metropolitan and the University Museum in Philadelphia have very interesting scrolls on this theme.

The depicting of court scenes was also a specialty with a succession of painters. The first of these is said to have been Chang Hsüan of the eighth century. Another of note was Ch'iu Ying, a version of whose 'Listening to Music' is in the Freer Gallery. T'ang Yin, noted for his paintings of women, was also a well-known

painter of court life. The Chinese painter did not choose the great dramatic moments such as our painters in the West select for portrayal, coronations and other colorful ceremonials, but the intimate human moments. In depicting the Emperor Ming Huang, for instance, it is his unofficial side that we see: instructing his young son, as in the scroll in the Metropolitan; drinking wine with his friend, the poet Li Po, as in the scroll in the Boston Museum; judging a horse; or training musicians. As a consequence, this man who had one of the most brilliant and luxurious courts in Chinese — or world history, for that matter — is known, not for his splendor, but for his more human and permanent qualities — those of the lover of children, of horses, and of music.

They delighted, too, in the portrayal of the occupations of women. In the famous scroll in the Boston Museum, ascribed to the Emperor Hui Tsung, the preparation of silk is portrayed; the beating, ironing and sewing. Another subject much in favor was that of a lady at her toilet. The toilet in itself is a ceremonial in China. That of the empress took two hours, while the one of a lady of position took scarcely less. At this ceremony the daughters-in-laws were expected to be in attendance. The Metropolitan Museum has a painting of a lady in green arranging her hair before an elaborately set toilet-table. In the 'Admonitions of the Instructress in the Palace,' attributed to Ku K'ai-chih, we have the earliest extant representation of the subject. Never is the lady portrayed in dishabille, a favorite treatment of the Western artist, but always fully clothed and about to put the finishing touches to hair or face.

The amusements of the ladies of rank furnished also a fruitful subject for the artist, and one he painted again and again. The British Museum has a famous scroll 'The Four Occupations of Women'; the Metropolitan a number of less well-known ones showing various phases of the subject. Another subject often painted was 'Springtime in the Palace of Han.' This shows the women of the palace reading, writing, playing *wei-ch'i*, amusing the children, arranging flowers and dancing — all with a delicate and delightful gayety befitting the season. Women, too, were portrayed as painters, poets, and musicians. The greatest painter of women, T'ang Yin, of the Ming Dynasty, has left rarely beautiful studies of them in almost every position and mood. Another painter of almost equal note was Chang Hsüan, of the T'ang Dynasty.

As has been said, the use made of the abstract or ideal feminine figure by the Chinese painter is very different from that of the West. Lafcadio Hearn epitomized our Western attitude: 'We have learned something of the beauty of Nature through our ancient worship of the beauty of woman.' (The emotion we experience from representations of the exquisite feminine form the Chinese receives from his flower pictures.) 'The ideal woman has become for us an æsthetic abstraction. Through the illusions of that abstraction only do we perceive the charms of our world, even as forms might be perceived through some tropic atmosphere whose vapors are iridescent.' That an artist should express electricity, philosophy, geometry, mechanics, the arts, and even the continents, by placing a woman in a graceful position and giving her some symbol to hold, is quite outside the

conventions of the East, though one of our own most widely cherished ones.

The Chinese artist delighted in festival paintings such as the 'Feast of the Lanterns,' 'The Dragon Festival,' and the 'Ceremony of the Cups.'

The Chinese painter is one of the few artists who could tell a story and point a moral without making his art didactic. He scarcely ever presented a subject without what he called an 'inner meaning.' But this 'inner meaning' never weakened the design nor overshadowed the purely artistic qualities of the painting.

The relations between parents and children were again and again portrayed, as in the painting in the Metropolitan Museum called 'Domestic Felicity,' in which the son is seen offering a peony with his good wishes to his father, or by the presentation of scenes from historic and legendary stories of filial piety. The feminine expression of filial piety was often represented by paintings of Mu Lan, the popular heroine who, when her father was too old to fight for the emperor, donned man's attire and fought for twelve years in his place, so 'saving his face' to use a Chinese expression, and rendering him the filial duties of a son.

The relations between husband and wife were usually portrayed by means of flower paintings or in rebus.

One of the most prolific subjects for the Chinese painter were scenes from the stories of the romantic women of China, those who gave all or received all.

Foremost among these was Yang Kuei-fei whose story has been retold in thousands of masterpieces and hundreds of great poems. She is a subject of which the Chinese artist never tires. She had all the charm of

Cleopatra and the winsomeness of Mary, Queen of Scots. Her story is pictured at every stage: when as a young girl of fourteen the Emperor Ming Huang sees her returning from the bath and falls madly in love with her; as the emperor's favorite when she wore 'half the robes of an emperor' and reigned in triumph; her tragic death; and the pathetic search for her by the emperor even to the gates of Heaven. The empire was ransacked for treasures to lay at her feet, and the great poets, Tu Fu, Li Po, Po Chü-i, and the great painters, Han Kan and Wu Tao-tzü worked to please her. Her extravagance finally ruined the country and a revolution broke out. The court fled before the outraged populace. There came a day when the starving soldiers who accompanied her demanded her life from the emperor. In order to save her from a worse fate, he at length yielded and ordered her strangled. But even in her death she remained beautiful and entrancing. Po Chü-i describes her as going, 'lily pale, between tall avenues of spears to die.' The emperor abdicated and spent the few remaining years of his life grieving for her. To Chinese literature she is what Helen of Troy is to Occidental.

They painted Hsi Shih, who might be called the Chinese Delilah, almost as frequently. She was sent as a present to a Prince of Wu and he became so infatuated with her that he lost his throne to the enemies who had sent her. So on through the list of a 'Thousand Beauties' who were pictured singly or in groups. All supplied the Chinese painter with endless romantic themes.

China, from the building of the Great Wall in the third century before Christ up to the present day, has



YANG KUEI-FEI IN THE PALACE GARDENS

Sung



always been surrounded by barbarian hordes ready to sweep down upon her and devastate her rich country. Sometimes they conquered her, sometimes she held them in subjection, but always their ways intrigued her painters and proved fruitful subjects for their brushes. They portrayed their crude customs and barbarous manners as in the scrolls in the Freer Gallery of the life of Chih Wen-chi, their greatest woman musician who was a captive among the barbarians for twelve years. Again they portrayed them riding, hunting or migrating in caravans, arriving on tribute-bearing missions to the Chinese emperors, escorting Chinese princesses on their way to become the brides of barbarian chieftains. Indeed, every phase of the nomad life of these peoples beyond the frontiers to the North and the West seems to have stimulated their interest. They delighted as well in representing the unknown animals and the strange products of the alien lands beyond their borders.

The first great painters of this subject were Yen Li-tê and his son Yen Li-pên of the T'ang Dynasty; they were followed by a host of painters in succeeding dynasties.

Childhood played its part also in Chinese figure-painting as it could not fail to do in a land where children are so much beloved. But in this, as in other phases of their art, the point of approach differs widely from that of the Western artist. They did not present their children as portraits of some particular child, nor yet as purely idealistic presentations of childhood. Their paintings, in addition to their surface picturing, carry some inner meaning, such as that of the much favored New Year's painting of a 'Hundred Children' showing a group of children playing with their bows and arrows, and hobby-

horses, scuffling together, painting pictures in imitation of their elders, or busy with the other games and occupations of childhood. The often painted subject of 'Children by a Lotus Pool' has the meaning, 'I wish that you may have many, many children, coming one by one as the lotus blossoms come.' Their child pictures are not any the less winsome for their profound association.

In the list of the subjects most frequently painted, their use of 'literary subjects' cannot be ignored. The lines of the poet have served as fruitful sources of inspiration for generations. Among the most popular poems are the 'Nine Songs of the Legendary Period' (Chiu ko t'u) and the 'Legend of the Goddess of the Lo River,' by Ts'ao Chih of the Han Dynasty, of which there is a very lovely and poetic presentation in the Freer Gallery in a scroll that was once attributed to Ku K'ai-chih himself.

From secular figure-painting to religious is but a step.

## CHAPTER VII

### FIGURE-PAINTING (*continued*)

#### RELIGIOUS PAINTING

RELIGION has always been the fertile soil from which art sprang, whether it be the Greek god, the Christian Madonna, or the Chinese Kuan Yin.

A remarkable breadth of religious tolerance has always characterized the Chinese. Persecutions for religious beliefs have been unknown among them; such persecutions as have occurred have been on account of the political not the religious teachings of the various faiths. Mohammedans, Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, and Confucians have all been allowed freedom of religious thought.

This tolerance led to the three so-called religions of China, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, intermingling and borrowing religious beliefs and even deities from each other. All sections of the people accept a common body of what may be called national beliefs: beliefs in certain gods, demi-gods, patriarchs and heroes (or whatever you may choose to call them). With the exception of Shang Ti, the whole body of objects worshiped are more or less distinctly conceived of as having had in the past, or as being destined to have in some future time, a human or at least a material incarnation. This idea is carried so far that it may be said that all human souls are or may be some day objects of reverence.

Many of the so-called gods of China were men or

women who led exemplary lives or bestowed some benefit on their fellowmen. Upon them was conferred a posthumous ennobling, very nearly analogous to the conferring of sainthood by the Catholic Church. Such a canonization in China was a secular function, not a religious one. The power was vested in the Chinese Government. An example of such a canonization is that of Kuan Yü who is known as the God of War. He lived about two hundred years after Christ, but was not canonized and raised to his present rank until 1594 by one of the Ming emperors. Shrines to men and women so canonized are scattered all over China. They form what has sometimes been erroneously called the gods of Confucianism.

Confucian forms of social intercourse interpreted every phase of life as a religious ceremony. While Confucianism is not a religion in the strict sense of the word, we have no other term in English with which to designate their reverent approach to life. Upon this ground the art which embodies its concepts may be classed as religious.

Some writers have presumed that Buddhism, on its long journey northward and eastward, created art as it went along, and was the beginning of art in China. But this is not so. A national art was already well developed long before Buddhism arrived. The stone engravings of the Han tombs are believed to be copies of actual paintings in the possession of the dead during their lifetime. In the 'Administrations of an Instructress' attributed to Ku K'ai-chih we find a reference to the manner in which tradition already had limited the treatment of certain themes. The text which accompanies

the painting makes the Lady Pan refuse to ride with an emperor of the Han Dynasty (dating roughly from B.C. 200 to A.D. 200) because in the ancient paintings a lady was never shown so riding.

The importance of Buddhism as a creative factor in Chinese art can thus be easily exaggerated. A truer view is probably that it infused an additional fervor into the already deeply rooted philosophical ideas of the Chinese and stimulated into new expression a long-established art.

Its fertilization of Taoist art was particularly fruitful. Laoism, as the early pure teachings of Lao Tzū are often called to distinguish them from the later form, had become overlaid in the course of the centuries by such a host of superstitions that the original teachings were almost lost. Yet this Taoism (the term for the later form), with all its sublimations and superstitions, stimulated the imagination of the Chinese artist more than either of the other two, and we owe to it all that is most alive and glowing in Chinese art.

Its chief contribution has been in the realm of the æsthetics. Chinese historians speak of Taoism as 'the art of being in the world.' It deals with the present and tries to find beauty in the mundane things about us. 'It is in us that God meets Nature and yesterday parts with to-morrow' to put it in the oriental manner. The present is the real Infinity.

The difference in the approach to life of these religions is epitomized in the little Chinese legend of the Three Vinegar Tasters: Sakyamuni Buddha, Confucius, and Lao Tzū. Each dipped a finger into a jar of vinegar—the emblem of life. Matter-of-fact Confucius found it

sour, Buddha called it bitter, and Lao Tzū proclaimed it sweet.

While the strongest influence of Taoism was felt in the paintings of the manifestations of Nature — the landscapes — the various gods, genii, or fairies, as these illusive beings are variously translated for lack of a more exact term, have furnished some of the most romantic subjects to Chinese art. These beings have nothing in common with the European conception of witches or wizards nor even the Celtic one of fairies. Their genius is one of gayety and world-forgetting youth. Many of them were human beings who were translated to an immortal state, and, by virtue of this, exercised certain mystic arts, including the power to live on dew and celestial fruit.

These supernatural beings were of two kinds. Human beings who attained immortality by living lives of contemplation in the hills or through the display of some particularly admirable characteristic or virtue, are known as *hsien* (the Sanskrit term, Rishi, is often used for them by Western writers), translated by us as 'Immortals.' In the same beneficent class are the beings who inhabit the higher regions and act as tutelary deities of roads, hills, rivers, and the like, and are known as *shēn*. In addition to these are the *kuei* and the *yao kuai*, the one more or less evil souls who return from the world of shades to work havoc, and the other a fierce class of demons who live in the wild regions southwest of China.

One of the most noted painters of *hsien* was Yen Hui, of the Yüan Dynasty.

Foremost in the Taoist pantheon of deities, both in popularity and in power, was Hsi Wang Mu. Her

origin is wrapped in mystery. There is some doubt whether originally she was a person or a place. The early Jesuit priests who were in China in the sixteenth century, and certain German scholars believed that she was derived from the Queen of Sheba. From the artistic standpoint, her origin is of little moment compared with the host of legends that have congregated about her name and to which the painter has given substance.

According to Taoist traditions she is the daughter of Heaven and Earth. Her name means the 'Queen Mother of the West' and she married, according to legend, the King Father of the East. These two 'manage co-jointly the masculine and feminine powers of Nature and arrange the harmony of heaven and earth' which result in heat and cold, rain and sunshine.

She is endowed with dazzling and wondrous beauty, and lives in a fairy palace of jade in the region of the setting sun. At the foot of her mountain is a stream of 'weak water,' ten myriad feet in width that can only be spanned by flying chariots. On this mountain is her peach orchard, the fruit of which confers immortality. Here, too, is the Taoist Paradise. Her emblem in addition to the peach is the *fēng huang*, which has been erroneously translated as the phoenix. She is often painted accompanied by these birds or with her two attendants called *yù nǚ*, or jade girls, who carry her peaches.

Taoist temple paintings often represent her as being worshiped by the Eight Immortals — especially those for use on her birthday.

Many stories are told of her; but the two that seem to have been the most frequent themes for the artist's

brush were those of her visit to the Emperor Wu, and the visit of the Emperor Wu to her.

According to the story told in the 'Private Records of the Han Dynasty' — a spurious work of later date — the Emperor Wu, who lived about a hundred years B.C., was so devout that Hsi Wang Mu heard of his piety and sent a messenger to him to tell him that as a reward she would pay him a visit on a certain day. On the seventh day of the seventh month, the emperor had his Flower Pavilion decorated with all his most valuable paintings, tapestries and bronzes, and a marvelous feast prepared. Then he sat down alone to await her coming. In the distance a small cloud appeared no bigger than a man's hand, and grew and grew until the emperor could see hundreds of winged tigers, horses, and dragons upon it and a large retinue of attendants. Hsi Wang Mu descended from the cloud and approached the emperor. She brought with her seven peaches of immortality, and gave four to the emperor and ate three herself. When she had finished hers, she noticed that the emperor, with true Chinese practicality, had saved his peach stones. On her questioning him, he confessed that he was planning to raise an orchard of peaches from the stones. Unfortunately he had not foreseen that it would take a thousand years for the trees to mature and that as a human he would be dead long since. Perhaps it was his covetousness that prevented the peaches he had already eaten from endowing him with the immortality necessary to become a celestial gardener.

The second favorite story utilized by the Chinese artist was that of the visit of the Emperor Wu to Hsi Wang Mu's paradise. The story first appeared in *Mu*

*t'ien-tzü chuan.* The legend recounts how the Emperor Wu crossed the protecting 'weak waters' on a bridge made of turtles. Once there Hsi Wang Mu forgave his intrusion and royally entertained him on the borders of her lake of jade.

In her worship are enlisted the Eight Immortals. The presentation of their persons and even of their symbols are favorite themes in Chinese art.

Chung-li Ch'üan, sometimes called Han Chung-li, is the foremost and greatest of the Immortals. He is usually presented as a fat man with a bare belly, and a fan in his hand to revive the souls of the dead. Sometimes this fan is no more than a feather. Again he carries only a peach. He is said to have been an official during the Han Dynasty, and to have evolved an elixir of immortality and so attained his place among the Immortals. He is reputed to have known much of the magic arts. He also is referred to by the title of the 'King Emperor of the True Action Principle.'

Li T'ieh-kuai's emblem is a pilgrim's gourd and staff and he is frequently represented as a beggar. There are many legends connected with him, one alleging that he was a pupil of Lao Tzü, and another that one day his soul left his body and went away for a seven days' journey. During its absence the body was to have been guarded by a disciple, but the disciple was faithless and when the soul returned the body had disappeared. The only unoccupied human shape it could find to inhabit was that of a beggar. He is the patron of astrologers and magicians.

Ho Hsien-ku is the only purely feminine member of the Eight. Her symbol is a lotus flower, generally car-

ried in a basket. She is the feminine example of filial piety. According to the story she spent herself in searching the mountains for tender bamboo shoots to tempt the appetite of her sick mother. She was made an Immortal as a reward. She is said to be the guardian spirit of housewives.

Lü Tung-pin carries a sword across his back and a Taoist fly-brush or whisk in his hand, called a 'cloud-sweeper.' This originally was a Buddhist emblem but was adopted as a Taoist symbol signifying the ability to fly at will through the air or walk on the clouds. The sword is used to ward off monsters and plagues from the world. He is often shown carrying a little boy. A painting portraying him in this manner indicates a wish for numerous offspring, among whom will be scholars and famous officials. He is therefore much honored by the literati. He was instructed, it is said, in the mysteries of alchemy and given the elixir of life by Chung-li Ch'üan himself. He went through ten temptations and spent some time as a sort of traveling missionary of immortality. He was a very skillful fencer.

Lan Ts'ai-ho is of uncertain sex, and in accord with popular belief is usually represented as a young person of about sixteen resembling a woman. The manner in which she obtained immortality seems to be as much a mystery as her sex. She is said to have wandered about in a tattered gown, with only one shoe, and to have slept on ice and snow from preference. She is the good genius of gardeners and always carries a basket.

Chang Kuo is reputed to have been a hermit during the T'ang Dynasty who achieved immortality. He is usually shown riding a white mule which has miracu-



AN IMMORTAL  
Attributed to T'ang



lous qualities. It can carry him thousands of miles in a day, and then be folded up like a piece of paper and put in his wallet when not in use. He carries castanets or a bamboo tube (a musical instrument) with two rods to beat upon it. He is alleged to be able to perform many marvelous feats of magic. A painting of him on the donkey with a child in his arms is often used in the bridal chamber, as foreshadowing descendants.

Han Hsiang-tzü's symbol is a flute. He was an ardent student of transcendental matters and is said to have been carried up into a peach tree by one of the other Immortals. He fell out of the tree and in falling obtained immortality.

Ts'ao Kuo-ch'iu (or kuo-k'iu as it is sometimes spelled) is always presented in court dress with castanets. There seems to be some confusion about his story, but one of the widely accepted versions is that he belonged to the ruling dynasty of his day, and was so shamed by the evil life of his brother that he left court and became a hermit. He was a student of transcendental matters and by meditating on 'The Way' became an Immortal.

Episodes from the lives of these Eight Immortals and their emblems appear frequently not only in Chinese painting but also on their ceramics and woven in their textiles.

In addition to the Eight Immortals there is a long list of supernatural beings who ride on cranes or fabulous animals and meet together in mountain retreats. Each community seems to have created its own pantheon. Some of these became so popular that they found a place in the national affection. Ma Ku is perhaps the best beloved of these. A painting of her attributed

to Chang Mei of the Five Dynasties is in the Freer Gallery in Washington. In this painting she is portrayed with a basket of fish, but a more popular presentation of her shows her accompanied by a faithful doe that carries her fruits and flowers: the peony of wealth, the peach of longevity, the *ling chih* (fungus) of long life which she gathers in Hsi Wang Mu's own garden. According to tradition she was the sister of Wang Yüan, an astrologer who rose to high official rank under an emperor of the Han Dynasty in the second century A.D. She is supposed to have been an expert soothsayer herself. She is said to have reclaimed a large portion of the land near Shanghai and to have planted it to orchards and rice. She is alleged to have reached immortality through meditation, asceticism, and the strict following of the Taoist teachings.

A painting of her is given as a birthday gift to a woman, just as a painting of the God of Longevity is given to a man on a similar occasion.

In these paintings of her, as in all other presentations of supernatural and celestial ladies or goddesses, the clothing is drawn to appear as if blown by a strong wind. It is an infallible means of distinguishing the heavenly from the earthly woman.

Shang Ti, whom the emperor worshiped, was never painted by the Chinese artist, but in Taoist mythology there is a God of Heaven who is often mistaken for him. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts has a gorgeously colored series of paintings of the Deities of Heaven, of Earth, and of Water, surrounded by their satellites.

Kuan Yü, a famous warrior of the Han Dynasty, is one of those numbered among the Taoist deities. He is

represented in various ways, as a dignified person with a flowing beard, and dressed in full armor; or again as seated with his hand raised as if speaking. Sometimes he is on horseback, sometimes he stands beside his charger, with two attendants. Occasionally he is pictured seated with a book in his hand, in which case he is regarded as a literary rather than a military deity and as typifying gentlemanliness and good conduct. He was raised to his celestial rank by a Ming emperor, but was especially favored by the Manchus, under the title of the God of War, Kuan Ti.

The Chinese have two other gods of literature. One, Wên Ch'ang (ti chün), is a star god who resides in one of the groups of the Great Bear, and is presented as a dignified bearded figure in official dress, usually seated with folded hands or else riding on a mule. A lesser but more popular divinity is the demon-faced K'uei Hsing, who was canonized in the fourteenth century. In life he was a scholar who was very badly disfigured. He won the highest place in the triennials but was refused office on account of his hideousness. He threw himself into the water, but was saved by the dragon-fish and carried to heaven. He is usually presented in conventional form, holding a writing-brush in his right hand and a square measure in his left, standing with one foot on the head of the dragon-fish, *yü-lung*, which is emerging from the waves. Chang Kuo, one of the Taoist Eight Immortals, is also looked upon as a patron of literature.

The Chinese have numerous other star deities, among the most popular of which is the God of Longevity, Shou Lao, who is usually associated with the South polar star. He is generally portrayed as a bearded old man

with large protuberances on his bald head due to thought, and holds a gnarled staff to which is attached rolls of writing, a fan or the peach of longevity. He is frequently shown seated on a rocky platform on the Hill of Longevity. His special attributes are a spotted deer, a crane, and the *ling chih* (fungus), and his robes are embroidered with the character *shou* (long life). A portrait of him is given to a man on his birthday. He is sometimes regarded as the disembodied spirit of Lao Tzü, and is represented riding on an ox. He is also presented with two other beings, both in the dress of officials, one holding a *ju-i* (scepter) which fulfills every wish, the other a babe who reaches out for the peach he holds in his hand. He with these two companions form the Taoist triad, Shou Hsing, Lu Hsing, and Fu Hsing, the star gods of Longevity, Preferment, and Happiness. Fu Hsing is sometimes accompanied by two boys, one of whom carries a lotus flower, the other a hand-organ.

Another favorite subject is that of the Cowherd, Ch'ien Niu, who inhabits a group of stars near the Milky Way, which have been variously identified as Aquila, and portions of Capricornus and Sagittarius. According to the legend he is in love with the Spinning Maid, Lyra, and can meet his beloved but once a year on the seventh night of the seventh month, when 'magpies fill the Milky Way and enable the Spinning Damsel to cross over.'

Taoism contributed to Chinese art a sense of the immaterial and non-visible, of the secret life of things — the waters, the clouds, the mountains, the springs, the mists, light and darkness; of animals, birds, and flowers, in fact of all that breathes.

Buddhism, after it reached China, both Mahâyâna and Hinayâna, was greatly modified by the Chinese outlook on life. While the Chinese Buddhist, like the Indian, felt the impersonality of Nature, he never conceived of it as being devoid of pity and of reason. He never became its slave and sport, nor, while remaining sensitive to its mystery, let that mystery crush him. He saw instead its beauty and harmony as links uniting it with humanity. Though he continued to use Indian Buddhistic art forms, the spirit that animated the work of the Chinese artist is in no sense Indian, as may be seen by comparing Chinese Buddhistic art with that in the temples of Ajanta. His has a peace the other wholly lacks.

Buddhist art, as it was first introduced into China, showed distinct Greco-Indian influences. Alexander the Great's conquest of northwestern India some centuries before, and the subsequent constant intercourse with the West, has been proved by scholars to have had a distinct influence on Indian Buddhist art. Some even claim that Buddha was never pictured until the introduction of Greek art ideals, and then was represented with many of the characteristics of Apollo. The nobility of the conventional attitude of the Buddha, together with his flowing draperies, are said to be due to this influence.

Buddhism did not become a force in Chinese art, however, until the Wei Dynasty, when it motivated a remarkable school of sculpture. It found its highest expression in painting in the works of Wu Tao-tzû and others of the T'ang Dynasty. Faith was then simple and almost childlike, and their paintings show a sincerity similar to that found in our own religious art.

of the Middle Ages, when faith, too, was still unquestioning and almost naïve. Although in subsequent centuries, Chinese painters continued to paint Buddhist subjects, they never again attained the same religious fervor. They had become too much sophisticated men of the world for their work to retain the sincerity and spontaneity of the T'ang. Our modern religious paintings show a similar sophistry, and lack of spontaneity.

The early Buddhist paintings seem to have been modeled on the sculpture of the time, using its slim hair-line and filling in the spaces with richer and richer coloring, until the severity of the line was nearly lost in the overlay. Wu Tao-tzǔ was the first painter to free himself from this tradition and use a broader technique and more sweeping line.

These religious paintings were of two kinds, one intended for the various phases of temple worship; and the other to be set above the altar in the more intimate, personal shrine.

Foremost, of course, among the subjects treated was the figure of the Buddha. He was presented most frequently in the Indian manner, either singly or surrounded by Lohans and other worshipers; or as the chief figure in the episodes of his numerous earthly incarnations.

Closely associated with the Buddha are the Bodhisattvas. They act as intermediaries for man. They are the saints of mercy and wisdom of the Buddhist religion; and, like our Christian saints, are often shown in attendance on their lord. They are even more frequently represented singly or surrounded by their own disciples. From their faces breathes the peace of inanimate things,

their brows have the tranquillity of an unearthly glory. To look upon them is to feel the everlasting, the remote, the impersonality and permanence of Nature herself.

Foremost among them in Chinese Buddhism is Kuan Yin (a translation of the Sanskrit Avalokitesvara). He (originally a masculine deity, but later changing to feminine) was a son in the mystical sense of Amitâbha (Amida), and is always placed (in masculine form) on his left hand in presentations of the Buddhist Triad.

In some manner (certain authorities attribute it to his assimilation with a native Taoist goddess), his sex changed from male to female about the end of the first millennium A.D. In the West sometimes the Sanskrit name Avalokitesvara and the Chinese Kuan Yin, or the Japanese spelling of it, Kwannon, is used interchangeably. Many of the painters, notably in the T'ang Dynasty, presented him in a rather effeminate form though retaining the moustache. About the Sung Dynasty, the sex seems to have changed definitely; and Kuan Yin becomes a woman. She is usually presented as wearing a necklace of pearls (a symbol of the Principle of Life) and sometimes a cowl-headdress, under which a small figure of Amitâbha can be seen. She is often portrayed standing or seated on a lotus leaf or by wave-beaten rocks, a waterfall or some other manifestation connected with water. According to the Buddhist scriptures, a sinner plunged into the fiery pit can, by earnest prayer to Kuan Yin, see the flames turned into living water. Frequently she is accompanied by a boy attendant called Shên Ts'ai, who represents humanity. Again at her side is placed a vase filled with the water of life, and she often carries a basket with the fish of 'spiritual

substance.' Another attendant of hers is Lung Nü, the Dragon maid, who carries the Pearl. A favorite presentation of her was as a barefooted Fisherwoman with humanity clinging to her skirts. When the early Catholic missionaries went to China, they thought she was a Chinese version of the Madonna, and actually sent statuettes of her to their converts in Japan. These statuettes can still be seen there, preserved in the museums.

As the 'Thousand-Armed Kuan Yin' she reflects the Indian influence from which she sprung. She is usually presented as standing (as in the painting in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) or seated, surrounded by a host of worshipers. She has usually about eight main arms with two, three or four concentric circles of hands with an eye in the palm of each. The hands hold symbols such as various colored lotuses, a halbert, a branch of willow, a sword, an arrow, a mirror, a figure of Buddha, a rosary, a bowl, a thunderbolt, a conch-shell, a jar, a banner, a jeweled wheel, and a brush of white hair.

A Chinese legend of the Ming Dynasty accounts for these thousand eyes and thousand hands by attributing to Kuan Yin an earthly incarnation as the daughter of the King of Hsinglin, Bhavagat, the adorable. Her father tried to force her to marry, but she preferred a life of devout celibacy, and retired from court. He would not have his will thwarted; and ordered her execution if she refused to obey him. She died amid many supernatural manifestations and was transported to the Buddhist Paradise. Some time later, her father was stricken with a mysterious and seemingly incurable disease, and she assumed human incarnation in the form

of a priest to sacrifice her eyes and hands to save him. In reward for this sacrifice, the Supreme Buddha promoted her to the Buddhist Trinity and gave her a thousand hands and eyes.

Kuan Yin stands to the Chinese as the 'All Compassionate One,' the 'Ever-Existing Savior,' to whom the humblest may pray, especially the woman who longs for the supreme crown of Chinese life, a son. She is also known as the Queen of Heaven and the Goddess of Mercy, and is a favorite subject with painters in this latter aspect.

Closely associated with the worship of the Buddha and the Kuan Yin are the Lohans, or Arhats, as they are often called. They were originally sixteen but were later increased to eighteen. They are much like the Taoist *hsien* in that they haunt the mountain solitudes, but they have none of the gayety and careless smile of their Taoist confrères, but are wrapped in contemplation and breathe out spirituality, intellectuality, and power. They so endeared themselves to the popular mind that their foreign origin has been almost forgotten and they are freely associated with the symbols of the native religion.

It is uncertain just when portraits of the Lohans were first introduced into China. There are authentic references to them in the records of the eighth century, though they were known in India many centuries earlier. The many paintings of them, said to have been in the imperial collection of the Emperor Hui Tsung from the brushes of the great T'ang masters, are now believed to have been forgeries made to meet his insistent demands for old masterpieces. By the Five Dynasties they had become a favorite subject of the painter.

The Lohans were disciples of the Buddha who had emancipated themselves from worldly passions and desires, and had attained enlightenment. But unlike the Bodhisattvas, they were content with reaching the blessed state, and made no attempts to lead other souls to the way of salvation. The seclusion of their lives in the mountains led some Western students to confuse them with the Taoist *hsien*. The Lohans were represented in groups or in solitary state, each accompanied by his attendant lion, tiger, or other guardian emblem.

The manner of their presentation in art differs from that of the Bodhisattvas. Each has a distinct physiognomy and expression. The Bodhisattvas are presented with a beneficent dignity such as will inspire love and respect, while the Lohans are treated freely and pungently. As a consequence in Buddhist art when a painting was created for purely religious purposes the Bodhisattvas were chosen, but when it was painted for aesthetic motives the Lohans were given preference.

The zenith of the portrayal of the Lohans was reached in the work of Li Lung-mien. The reason why the painting of Lohans should have been so exceedingly popular in Sung times, is said to have been because the great advance made in landscape-painting during this period caused figure-painting to become free and imaginative. The Freer Gallery in Washington has a series of sixteen Lohans in the manner of Li Lung-mien, and both the Metropolitan and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts have paintings in his style.

The subjects portrayed by the Buddhist painters were endless; for as Buddhism grew it absorbed into itself not only the mass of alien forms from Indian



LOHAN  
Yüan



mythology, but many of the Chinese native beliefs as well. Occasionally Taoist and Buddhist theologies were blended, and the artist presented the Lohans visiting Hsi Wang Mu in her Western Paradise.

There is no dogma in Buddhism of an everlasting hell. The torment is limited and the culprit has an opportunity to improve his physical and moral conditions after countless evolutions, and be born anew. The time spent in purgatory is, as a consequence, only one episode in the cycle of transmigration. The Chinese borrowed their ideas of purgatory from the Indians. Both Chinese Buddhists and Taoists had systems of purgatory, each apparently borrowing ideas freely from the other. These became very complicated, involving hundreds of hells, dark, as well as hot and cold. Some of the Buddhist painters seemed to have delighted in portraying the tortures that the sinful were supposed to undergo. Wu Tao-tzü, according to a contemporary critic, is said to have made his paintings of the subject so realistic that those who looked upon them were forced 'to seek after virtue and give up evil practices.' It is of interest in this connection that more than one modern student of Dante has advanced the theory that there is a relation between his conceptions of the Inferno and that of the Buddhist conception of hell. The idea is supposed to have been brought back from the East by the returned travelers of his day.

There were many great Buddhist religious painters, some of whom are only known to us through criticism and comment, as there are thought to be no actual paintings by them in existence. Of the early men, two of the most noteworthy were Chang Hsiao-shih, who was fa-

mous for his paintings of the Buddhist hell, and Wu Tao-tzü, whose most famous religious painting was of the 'Death of Buddha.' Of the Sung painters the great outstanding name is that of Li Lung-mien with his 'Five Hundred Disciples of Buddha (Sakyamuni)' and his paintings of Kuan Yin. Küan Yun of that period left several Buddhist religious paintings of note; while Chou Chi-ch'ang and Lu Hsin-chung were two priests who painted in color instead of in the monochrome so much in vogue in their day and whose works were almost entirely exported to Japan. The Yüan Dynasty produced Yen Hui who painted chiefly figures from the Buddhist legends.

A later development of Buddhism, but one that did not reach its zenith until the Sung Dynasty, was the Zen or Ch'an sect. To this sect is given the credit, by all the writers on Chinese art, of having fostered the development of landscape-painting.

Through the teachings of the Zen, the artist obtained a better understanding of the psychological conditions under which art is produced than he has had in any other period of the world's civilization. It taught him how to tap the unconscious. Art was regarded as a kind of Zen, a delving down into the Buddha that is within each of us. Through Zen we annihilate Time and see the Universe, not split up into myriad fragments but as a unity. According to their beliefs an artist's work must be imbued with a vision of the subjective, the non-phenomenal aspects of life. Otherwise his work will have no more meaning than a boy's.

It was in Zen terms that art was usually discussed in the China and Japan of the twelfth century. The paint-

ings produced were of two kinds, illustrations of episodes in the lives of great Zen teachers, and nature subjects. Many of its disciples retired to the hills for contemplation, and the 'White Lotus Club' and the 'Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove,' as two of these groups were called, have furnished the painter with endless subjects. As uniformity of design was considered fatal to the freshness of imagination, they avoided expressing not only completion but repetition. Landscapes, birds, and flowers became their favorite subjects, rather than the human figure, the latter being present to their minds in the person of the onlooker. In the presentation of these nature objects, the artists sought to identify themselves with them and to externalize their inner Buddha in the depictions of them.

Mu Chi, about A.D. 1215, founded the Liu T'ung-ssü School of Zen art. He was the first to use the erratic type of monochrome invented by Shih K'o two hundred years before. He is the great impressionistic painter of China, seeking to fix on silk the 'frenzy produced by wine, the stupor of tea or the vacancy of absorption.' Among his followers were Lo-ch'uang, Liang K'ai, and Li Ch'üeh. With the coming of the Mongols, Lamaistic Buddhism rose to ascendancy, but with the return of a purely Chinese Dynasty in the Ming, and even in the succeeding Ch'ing (Manchu) Dynasty, Zen art was revived and practiced by a small group.

The Chinese painter mingled all three so-called religions in his artistic output as his mood required. (Li Lung-mien is a notable example of a painter who painted Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist subjects with equal skill and reverence). Confucianism and Taoism sought

happiness in success: one in the enjoyment of a well-ordered, peaceful private life, the other in the enjoyment of good luck. The Confucian forms of social intercourse and the Taoist interpretations of man's environment made every act of life a religious ceremony. To both the prolonging and expanding of life and energy were good things, and much of their painting conveys their wishes and ideals upon the subject. Buddhism, on the other hand, glorified renunciation, the subduing of all lusts and earthly passions, all loves and hates, all selfish wishes, and the withdrawal to a life of solitude and meditation. This, too, found its response in the artist's soul.

The teachings of these three so-called religions gave the Chinese painter more matter for deep moral and philosophical speculation than the painter of any other nation has had, appealing as they did to all sides of his nature. He came to look upon living itself as the holiest of rituals, and the art that portrayed mankind's virtues, nature's loveliness, or merely the grace of an insect alighting on a flower, as more religious than what we call 'religious subjects.' It endowed his art with a spiritual significance that such Western secular art entirely lacks.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FLOWERS, BIRDS, AND ANIMALS

THE poignant emotion that is aroused in the Western world by paintings of the human face and figure, especially of the nude, is very nearly paralleled by that aroused in the Chinese artist by the fragile beauty of a flower or the graceful flight of a bird. He sees manifested in them the soul of Nature which to him is one with the soul of man. He infuses into this appreciation a touch of the mystical. It is recorded that one Chinese lover of flowers slept in a boat at night on a lake so that his dreams might be mingled with those of a lotus. Nothing is too mean or too insignificant for his contemplative mind; he see the fullness of life as surely in the small as in the great. In Chinese flower-painting as in Chinese poetry 'the sound stops but the sense flows on.' A hint to the imagination is enough.

Floriculture has always had a deeper significance in the Far East than with us. In Japan, the cult of flower arrangement is of ancient origin; while in China floriculture was no less extensively practiced. Emperor Ming Huang, it is said, had tiny gold bells hung on the flowers in his garden to frighten off predatory birds; and in T'ang and Sung times, it is related, that with the development of ceramics, plants were housed not in pots but veritable jeweled palaces. The cult was carried to such an extent that it was asserted that the peony thrived best when bathed by the hands of a maiden in

full ceremonial costume, and the winter-plum when watered by a pale, slender monk.

Certain artists painted nothing but birds and flowers and so subtle became their art that it could be said of them as it was of Pien Ching-chao (or Pien Wén-chin as he is often called), of the Ming Dynasty, that he could paint 'the sweet smile of a flower and the scream of a bird upon the wing.' Among these were Huang Shêng, who is called the father of floral painting, and Chao Ch'ang and Hsü Hsi, of the Northern Sung School, who brought it to perfection. It did not, however, exist as a separate art until the middle of the T'ang period. It had its origin, according to some scholars, in the floral accessories of Buddhist painting. It was customary to surround these early Buddhist paintings and bas-reliefs with a frame or margin of floral design. Such floral frames can be seen in some of the banners brought back by the Sir Aurel Stein expedition.

The most noted T'ang flower-painter was Pien Luan. The Northern Sung School, however, was the one which produced the majority of flower and bird pictures. A vast number of their works are recorded as being in the collection of the Emperor Hui Tsung, himself a realistic flower-painter of note, but unfortunately the greater part of them perished with the sack of Pien (the modern K'ai-feng fu) at the end of his reign. Other flower-painters of the same dynasty were Hsü Hsi, Chao Ch'ang, the most renowned of them all, and Li An-chung, who had a very individualistic style; Ch'ien Shun-chü, and Wang Jo-shui, a realistic painter of the Yüan; Lü Chi, who painted flowers and birds against a landscape, and a host of minor followers in the Ming.



GRAPEVINE IN WIND AND MOONLIGHT

Attributed to Yüan



The Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty also produced numerous painters who carried on the old flower tradition, such as Shên Nan-p'in and Yün Nant'-ien and Yün Ping.

In their flower painting, even more than elsewhere, the thorough and minute observation characteristic of the Chinese artist in his study of his subject is noticeable. Petrucci says: 'Flowers are studied with such a comparison of their essential structure that a botanist can readily detect the characteristics typical of a species, despite the simplifications which an artist always imposes on the complexity of form. This general class is subdivided. The epidendrum, the iris, the orchid, and the chrysanthemum become special studies, each of which had its own masters, both from the standpoint of the painting itself and the application of the æsthetic rules which govern this art.'

They took the same infinite pains in making these studies of blossoms as they did in their most impressive landscapes. According to Kuo Hsi in his treatise on painting: 'Those who study flower-painting take a single stalk and put it into a deep receptacle, and then examine it from above, below, and from all sides, thus seeing it from all points of view. Those who study bamboo painting take a stalk of bamboo, and on a moonlight night project its shadow on a piece of white silk on a wall; the true form of the bamboo is thus brought out.'

At various times, particularly during the Sung Dynasty, flowers were painted solely in monochrome, the artist depending on the tones of ink to 'give color.' It was claimed that color made a sensuous appeal with its suggestion of texture that disturbed the spirit of contemplation. Other painters used color in subdued

tones with a most harmonious effect; still others, inspired by the Emperor Hui Tsung, painted as realistically as possible.

Though the subjects of the Chinese flower-painter were only limited by the flora of the country, certain ones were treated more frequently than others.

The Four Seasons is one portrayed over and over again. The subject is hallowed not only by tradition, but such paintings have a definite place ascribed to them in certain Chinese ceremonials, as mentioned before. The flowers used are the Peony for spring, the Lotus for summer, the Chrysanthemum for fall, and the Wild Plum or Prunus for winter. These flowers are seldom combined in one painting, though Wang Wei and a few other painters are accused of having disregarded the seasons and combined them indiscriminately. The same tree or flower was portrayed in its varying aspects: as the prunus tree in spring, summer, autumn and winter, with the birds or insects appropriate to each season, or the lotus at morning, midday or evening.

The Peony, in addition to its place in the Four Seasons, is regarded as the king of flowers and is looked upon as the flower of the Yang principle — that of light, strength, and masculinity. It is used to signify a wish for wealth and good fortune. It is particularly associated with Li T'ai-po and Chou Mao-shu.

The Lotus is a symbol of creative power. As it rises unspotted from the mud it betokens purity. It is the particular emblem of the Chün Tzü, the superior man of the Confucian classics, as well as that of the Bodhisattvas and some of the minor Buddhist and Taoist deities.

The Chrysanthemum suggests joviality, coming as it does at the time of the harvest. It is also the emblem of the scholar. Since it continues to bloom in spite of the frost it suggests also fidelity and constancy, and is associated in particular with its admirer, T'ao Yüan-ming.

The Wild Plum is erroneously known as the 'hawthorn' on china, due to the mistake of early students. It is indirectly associated with Lao Tzū, and is always treated as the emblem of fragrance and snowy purity in poetry. It blooms while the snow is still on the ground and is associated with the Chinese New Year.

The *Lan-hua*, several species of orchids, is particularly admired by the Chinese painter for its slender grace of line. It has become the symbol of noble men and refined women. The houses of the sages of the hills were often poetically designated as the 'Orchid Pavilion,' and in poetry it was used to refer to the women's apartments and everything connected with them.

The Rose Mallow is another favorite subject. It symbolizes a wish for good luck and riches. It is one of the most highly prized flowers, and was a frequent subject for the painter's brush.

The Narcissus, which is forced into flower for the Chinese New Year season, is called the water-fairy flower (*shui hsien hua*) and hence conveys an allusion to the immortality of the Taoists.

Sweet Flag is supposed to have a certain spiritual form that is grown exclusively in the Taoist paradise and can be seen only by the Immortals.

The Orange symbolizes good luck.

Every flower, bird, and beast has for the Chinese mind certain definite meanings, poetic or instructive. The

Chinese combine them in endless variety, and give paintings representing them as wedding anniversary and birthday presents, and on other occasions of importance. They arrange them according to certain associated ideas, and these groupings are known as rebuses. A combination of a plum tree in blossom with young bamboos, with swallows and other birds flying about, and a peacock strutting in the foreground, would be hung for weddings and other festal ceremonies. Three graceful egrets surrounded by a peach tree in full bloom and a willow in young leaf, both emblems of spring, becomes a rebus in the subtle manner most popular with the Chinese, a play on words. Egret is *ssü* and thought is *ssü*, words of the same sound, though written with different characters. The implication is therefore 'Think thrice — then act.' This is a traditional subject that has been treated through the centuries in many different ways.

There is scarcely a grouping of bird, beast, flower, or tree that does not convey to the sensitive Chinese mind some inner meaning. Nor do they confine the use of these rebuses entirely to their paintings, but employ them freely on their potteries and in their textiles.

In European flower paintings we feel the flowers have been pulled from the fields and arbitrarily arranged to feast our eyes. The Chinese, on the contrary, usually portray their flowers, not cut and dying in a bowl but still attached to their roots, answering the joyous call of each passing breeze. Even our garden pictures fail to catch the same zest for life that the Chinese flower-paintings display. They contain something of the beauty that 'neither sows nor spins.' After we have commended them as 'fine color and a bit of excellent design' we have



NARCISSUS

Yüan



still left much unsaid. The effect produced is something rarer and finer than our Western painters have yet achieved.

Closely allied to the presentation of flowers is the portrayal of trees. Under the influence of Chinese philosophical and symbolic ideas, they furnished the painter with endless subjects. The five trees most often painted were the bamboo, the pine, the peach, the prunus, and the willow.

The Bamboo was an inexhaustible subject. The artist painted it in rain and sunshine, in wind and in calm. He studied the bamboo so assiduously and analyzed its leaves so minutely — as he did indeed every subject he portrayed — that he knew how they spread joyously in fine weather, hung down despondently in the rain, crossed one another confusedly in a wind, and pointed vigorously upward in the dew of early morning. He portrayed it in small groups or groves — carrying a connation of happiness — as single trees, or merely cross sections of its leaves and branches (as in the famous painting of bamboo by the Lady Kuan in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts). The 'Bamboo in Spring Rain' was one of the favorite renderings of the Four Seasons. Among the many meanings attached to the bamboo is modesty, protection from defilement and unchangeableness, unalterability. As its center is hollow it symbolizes open-mindedness and readiness to accept suggestions and treasure good advice. On account of its durability and continued greenness it carries also the suggestion of longevity. Waley develops the meaning still further and says that 'the Chinese have regarded the bamboo rather as a symbol of culture, of refinement,

of "gentility" in the mediæval sense of the word.... The bamboo then is a symbol of highbreeding, fastidious taste, of what the Chinese call *fēng-liu* (which is the opposite of vulgar).'

It was painted in full color and in monochrome, though this latter style seems to have been most often used. Wu Tao-tzü is credited with being the originator of this latter. The painters of the bamboo are too numerous to list.

The Pine was scarcely less often portrayed. It is the foremost tree-symbol of longevity on account of its ever greenness; and from its steadfastness, it carries also the suggestion of immortality. A painting portraying it is used as a gift to a friend to express a wish for his long life. The austerity and grandeur of its lines make the Chinese artist's representation of it very nearly akin in grasp and sweep to his landscapes.

The Peach Tree has different meanings according to the part portrayed. The tree itself is the symbol of longevity, and of undying truth; its stone is the emblem of long life; and its fruit, of immortality. The peach (fruit) is carried by innumerable Taoist deities, and is the special emblem of Hsi Wang Mu. The blossom is used to suggest happy married life. It is also used as a symbol of a pretty woman.

The Wild Prunus has already been treated under the Flowers of the Four Seasons. As it is the first flower to open, it is called the 'first' and signifies the beginning of things. It is one of the three friends, the bamboo, the pine, and the prunus, who do not fear winter. Not only is the entire tree painted, but frequently single branches of it. In pottery and textile designs the blossoms are

frequently presented alone. A painting of a *Prunus* is often used as a New Year's gift.

The grace of the Willow is so closely akin to that of the Bamboo that it has never ceased to interest the Chinese painter. It was much used as a religious emblem; the Buddhist considered that water sprinkled with it had an especially purifying effect, and Kuan Yin is frequently portrayed with a wand of it in her hand. Its lightness and durability give an idea of extreme vitality. It frequently was employed as a figure of speech by secondary wives in referring to themselves in writing to their husbands; and, by a broadening of its meaning, it came to refer to the deserted wife. The painter used it to denote the changing seasons, and portrayed its leaflessness in winter, and its full leafage in summer. They loved to paint it bending before the wind, or standing in calm dignity undisturbed, or drooping over a stream.

Another tree of which the painter was very fond was the Cinnamon or Cassia. According to Taoist legend it grows in the garden of Hsi Wang Mu, the 'Cassia tree of jade-stone.' A T'ang legend says it grew upon the moon, and identifies it with an Indian sacred Buddhist tree. The lunar hare squats at its foot and pounds drugs of immortality. It is supposed to be visible in the moon in autumn. It is a symbol of literary success, and examinations have been poetically called 'plucking a leaf from the cassia.'

The Love Tree, or *Japonica*, is dearly beloved of the Chinese artist. Its twining branches have been the symbol of married happiness since legendary times. The story connected with it is that the lady Lo-chu was

so beautiful that the emperor of her day fell in love with her, and caused her husband to be cast into prison and later beheaded, somewhat after the fashion of our Bible story of David and Uriah. But she continued to repulse him, sending him word:

‘Sparrows and magpies fly in pairs,  
They esteem it no pleasure to fly with the phoenix.  
I am one of the common people;  
I esteem it no honor to dwell with the emperor.’

But he would not take *no* for an answer and made her join him in one of his hill palaces. She dressed herself in her sheerest garments, and, when he attempted to seize her, flung herself over the precipice, her draperies parting in his hands. When her body was picked up from the rocks below, a note was found in her girdle begging that she be buried with her husband. But the emperor’s jealousy followed her even after death, and he forbade it. From the grave of each a tree is said to have sprung up, and, bending toward each other, to have intertwined their branches. Here a pair of mandarin ducks, the symbol of married happiness, took up their abode. The story is usually suggested by a pair of tree trunks entwining.

The Mulberry, too, is often a subject for a picture, sometimes symbolizing filial piety, and sometimes recalling its more utilitarian use as food for the silkworm. The Plantain, from the mournful sound of rain on its leaves, conveys sadness and grief; the Umbrella tree, from which the table-lute, the *ch'in*, is made, suggests integrity, high principles, and great sensibility.

These are only a few of the more important of the numerous trees which the Chinese artist portrayed, each with a symbolic meaning of its own.

The Chinese artist also delighted to make studies of the same tree in its varying aspects in the Four Seasons.

The fruit of the Pomegranate is often portrayed by the Chinese artist separate from the tree. In addition to being the Buddhist symbol of good luck, its many seeds cause it to be the token of a wish for a large family.

The Chinese painter constantly placed a bird or an insect in conjunction with the flower or tree that it frequents. The bird holds a peculiar place in Chinese thought, both in its spiritual meaning, and in its concrete use in daily life. The Chinese gentleman of to-day can be seen gravely strolling abroad with his bird on his finger, out for an airing. It holds much the same place in his affection that the dog does with us in the West.

Minute studies were made by the painter of their plumage at different seasons and the varying habits of mountain, field, and water birds, each portrayed in its suitable environment and in the plumage to correspond to the herbage of the season. He even presented the domestic fowl in its homely occupations.

It is difficult for the Occidental who is not well versed in the lore and poetry of China to understand the illusive inner meanings and poetic allusions which the Chinese associate with the different birds. Some, however, are commonly portrayed and thus have come to have a very definite, concrete significance.

Wild Geese might be said to be the favorite subject of the Chinese bird painter. They are portrayed in flight, on the water, and on the shore. They are the symbol of married fidelity in song, story, and drama, for it is claimed that a wild goose separated from its companion never mates again. It is the particular bird of the *Yang* or

Principle of Light and Masculinity in Nature. ‘It follows the sun in his wintry course toward the south, and has an instinctive knowledge of the times and seasons’ in its migrations. In the symbols of the Four Seasons, it represents autumn, while the swallow is the harbinger of spring, the egret of summer, and the magpie (on its plum tree) winter. It must be remembered in interpreting all these that the tree and the flower with which it is connected in the painting may condition its meaning.

Closely associated with the Wild Geese is the gentle and delicate Mandarin Duck, the tranquil and tender symbol of married happiness and constancy. Li Po, the great poet, declared in one of his poems that they would ‘prefer to die ten thousand deaths and have their gauze-like wings torn to fragments’ rather than be parted. Like the Wild Geese they are inexhaustible subjects for the painter’s brush.

The Wild Swan also belongs to this group.

Another bird connected with married life is the Nightingale (bulbul) with its white top-knot. It is often seen in what is known as ‘white-headed scrolls,’ and is a symbol of longevity and conveys the wish to a married couple that they may grow old together.

The Crane (including the stork and other members of this group) is, next to the Phœnix, the most celebrated bird in Chinese legends; it is regarded as the patriarch of the feathered tribe. It has many mystical attributes and is associated with the Taoist deities by whom it is used as a celestial messenger and winged steed to transport those who have obtained immortality to the Taoist Paradise. According to legend, human beings sometimes suffered metamorphosis into them; it is thought

— perhaps as a consequence — to ‘constantly manifest a peculiar interest in human affairs.’ There are four kinds, the yellow, the black, the white, and the blue. It is believed by the Chinese to live to a fabulous age and is therefore a symbol of longevity.

The Egret is one of the most beautiful bird subjects, both for its own beauty of line and in the wish for happiness it conveys.

The Magpie, instead of being the chatterer and mischief-maker he is considered in the West, is the Chinese bird of good omen, and is a bearer of news and an announcer of joyousness.

The Dove or Pigeon is another symbol of the longevity that means so much to the Chinese, as it is supposed to have unusual powers of digesting its food. In Han times and later it was carved in jade and bronze and used as a knob on a staff, to be given as a gift to an octogenarian. It also appears on the hats of those mysterious clay figures found in tombs, whose significance is still unknown.

A painting of the Golden Pheasant symbolizes a wish that the brothers of a family may live happily together in peace and harmony.

Birds were also employed to symbolize the Five Relations of Mankind, though they are said not to have been commonly used in this manner until Ch‘ing (Manchu) times. The Phœnix symbolized the relations between the emperor and his minister; the stork between father and son; the mandarin duck, between husband and wife; small gray birds (wagtails), between brother and brother; and yellow birds, between friend and friend.

Even the barnyard fowls had their place in the artist's conception of bird life. Mei Hsing-ssü of the Five Dynasties was so famous a painter of this subject that his name has become almost synonymous with it. 'Its drinkings and peckings and loiterings, the attitudes of the cock and hen, the ramblings of the brood, the calls to food,' were portrayed again and again in a most delightful intimate manner with a little ripple of humor. Another aspect was the cock with 'its methods of attacking the enemy, advancing with dignity, trembling with excitement while waiting for the attack, feathers ruffled and neck swelling.' Cock fighting in China is one of the favorite sports. The Cock itself is regarded as the bird of fame and is often associated in paintings with the peony to express a wish for 'riches and honor.'

Another subject of great popularity is one called the 'Hundred Birds,' usually painted on a long hand-scroll, and showing members of the feathered tribe gathered together to do honor to some particular bird.

Certain birds have come to be traditionally associated with certain flowers: a phœnix on a rock with a peony and a magnolia growing close by; partridges and quails with millet; swallows with willows; sparrows with the prunus tree; to name only a few of the hundreds of combinations used.

As in his presentation of birds and flowers the Chinese artist was careful to place his insects and other winged creatures in the environment in which they belonged.

The Butterfly was one of his favorite subjects, and he was particularly fond of portraying it in airy flight. It is one of the emblems of conjugal felicity; and at times

conveys an element of romantic love that makes it somewhat akin to our cupid.

The Cicada is often pictured with some flowering plant. From its wonderful life history, emerging from apparent death in the earth, it has come to be the symbol of resurrection. Stones, carved in its shape, were buried with the dead from earliest times.

The Praying Mantis which devours the cicada is regarded as the emblem of courage and perseverance.

The Bat is an especially happy omen and is frequently used in paintings, on ceramics, and, conventionalized, in textiles. Five bats portrayed together convey the wish for the five blessings of happiness, longevity, riches, love of virtue, and peace.

A painting of a cat combined with a butterfly conveys the idea of a hundred-year-old man, and hence a wish for longevity.

Animals, portrayed by the Chinese artist, were of two types, the real and the mythological. Both had their symbolic meanings.

Back of all Chinese symbolism is a wide-reaching philosophical conception of the universe and the causes of life which they designate as the *Yin Yang*, the dualistic principle of Nature, the positive and negative, heat and cold, light and dark, the masculine and feminine. It lies back of Taoism and Confucianism, and has its roots in the unrecorded beginnings of the race. It colors the simplest act of daily life (even such a commonplace action as giving a present conforms to it for the gift must consist of a pair). It is the foundation on which the doctrine of the 'Middle Way' rests, and may be said to be the cause of their intense 'reasonableness.'

It is too profound a metaphysical subject to be more than touched upon here. In a manual of quotations compiled in the fifteenth century, the Chinese attitude is summarized by the saying of Ch'ang Yu: 'The *Yin* or female element in nature by itself would not be productive; the *Yang* or male element in nature alone would not cause growth: therefore through the *Yin* and *Yang* Heaven and Earth are mated together. The man by the help of the woman makes a household and the woman by the help of the man makes a family; therefore the human race pairs off as husband and wife.'

This conception found its symbolic form in the round jade disk, representing Heaven, and the jade tube, representing the Earth. Carved presentations of these have been found dating back to the earliest ages, and they are still represented in certain of their ceramics, such as the round 'pilgrim's bottle' and the tube-like vase. The *Yin Yang* also found expression in the Eight Diagrams, later formed into the Pakua. Various modifications of these are found throughout their art designs. They became the basis of their philosophy of divination and geomancy. They are made up of eight combinations of three lines each, the lines being whole or divided into two equal parts. They are said to have been developed by Fu Hsi, the legendary founder of the Chinese polity, who is reputed to have lived about three thousand years before Christ. He is said to have evolved them by the aid of an arrangement of figures revealed to him on the back of a 'dragon horse.' The whole lines represent the male character, the broken the female. In the proportion in which they are arranged, they symbolize heaven and earth, water and all that pertains to it, fire and

light with their associated elements, wind, thunder, and the various other forces of Nature.

The four major mythical animals of the Chinese are the Dragon, the Phœnix, the Tortoise, and the Ch'i-lin (or Kylin) to all of which were attributed supernatural powers.

The Dragon is one of the Chinese primitive nature symbols and has always had a far-reaching spiritual significance. Its meaning has, however, fluctuated through the centuries; and with each change in the national mind it has acquired fresh significance and new interpretations. It must not be confused with the lizard-like monster which in the Western world goes under that name. It is entirely different. It is derived from a fish form, and is primarily a spiritual symbol of water. In its broader sense it is the symbol of the power of heaven: typifying Spring and fertility; rain and flood, and is looked upon as producing beneficent clouds and mist.

Such was its common significance. But in the imagination of poets and artists it became charged with a wider spiritual significance, one intensely fluid, varying with the dominating conceptions of each succeeding epoch. It is a vivid and picturesque moulding into visible, formidable shape of the shadowy terrors of the unknown and non-human forces in Nature that have overawed mankind from the childhood of the race. It is the sign of all penetrating, omnipresent fluidity, of eternal rejuvenation, of perpetual change. It is often presented as a series of flashing fanged heads among clouds, as in the scroll at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, suggestive of lightning. It is interesting to note in this

connection that the Chinese artist seldom committed the solecism of portraying the entire dragon. He presented usually only the awe-inspiring head and let each onlooker supply the details for himself. It was also frequently presented under the title 'The Spring Dragon rising from Sleep' as one of the paintings of the Four Seasons. Dragon-painting reached its zenith in the thirteenth century. Ch'êng Jung was noted for his great renderings of the subject as was Wu Tao-tzü.

Closely associated with the Dragon and equally symbolic of power was the Tiger. It is the emblem of the Earth. It is also a solar animal, the star Ursa Major. The White Tiger is the name given to the West and to autumn. When a tiger was presented in monochrome it was intended by the artist to be the symbolic tiger; when in full natural colors, the actual living one. It did not appear frequently in painting until the tenth century. It often accompanies a Lohan.

*I Ching* (Philosophy of 'Changes') says that clouds follow the dragon and winds the tiger, and the Chinese artist never fails to portray them with their accompanying element.

The Phoenix is an erroneous early translation for the *Fêng Huang*, but the error is now too firmly established in the Western literature on the subject to be eradicated and must be accepted, however reluctantly. The *Fêng Huang* has not the slightest suggestion in its symbolism of 'being consumed by fire and rising to a new birth from the ashes,' the meaning we associate with the word in the West. Some translators have attempted to correct this impression by translating the word as the 'crested love pheasant,' but this too leaves much unsaid.

It is in reality an entirely mythical bird, resembling the pheasant but with two peacock feathers in its tail. It is the companion of Hsi Wang Mu, and belongs to Taoist symbolism. In one of the favorite presentations of it, it is perched upon a rock with its mate at the base, among flowers.

Among the many meanings attached to it is one that it stands for the sun and warmth, summer and abundant harvests. It thus becomes the herald of an auspicious event, and denotes happiness. Some scholars say it signifies love and affection of all kinds as well.

It was also used as the insignia of the empress.

The Tortoise is the symbol of longevity, of strength and duration. Astronomical legend makes it the embodiment of the star Yao Kuang in Ursa Major. The earth is supposed to rest upon it. Combined with the serpent it became the symbol of the north — the two were known as 'The Dark Warriors' — and Wu Tao-tzü, like many of his predecessors, painted many representations of them, as he did in fact of other astronomical subjects such as the 'Twenty-Eight Lunar Asterisms,' and 'The Five Planets.' Later painters of note, however, seldom portrayed the Tortoise.

The Ch'i-lin (or Kylin), though much used in pottery, is not so common in painting. It is a composite animal with the body of a deer, the tail of an ox, and often the scales of a fish, while a horn protrudes from its head. It is the symbol of good will and benevolence toward all living things, the personification of happiness and perfection. It is said to make its appearance when a sage is born. It is usually portrayed standing on a rock.

In addition to these are the Badger, the Fox, the Bear,

the Monkey, and the other animals symbolic of the firmament and the hours of the day; all of them have their place in painting, and to each is attached some symbolic meaning.

In his portrayal of 'living' birds and beasts the Chinese artist displays none of the sentimentality which mars so much of our Western animal-painting. The tiger roars in his solitudes, the eagle and hawk dwell undisturbed on their rocky crags. In a quotation from the catalogue of the Emperor Hui Tsung's collection, compiled about A.D. 1120, we have what may be the only existing essay on 'animal-painting.' In it is set forth the Chinese painter's ideals:

'The horse is used as a symbol of the sky, its even pace prefiguring the steady motion of the stars; the bull, mildly sustaining its heavy yoke, is fit symbol of the earth's submissive tolerance. But tigers, leopards, deer, wild swine, fawns, and hares — creatures that cannot be inured to the will of man — these the painter chooses for the sake of their skittish gambols, and swift, shy evasions, loves them as things that will not be haltered with a bridle nor tethered by the toe. He would commit to brushwork the gallant splendor of their stride; this he would do, and no more.'

The sportsman's interest in Nature which has inspired so much of European art, was rarely seen in Chinese painting; in the few instances in which it does appear, it is the result of some invasion of northern barbarians (hunters and warriors) who imposed for a time their ideas upon the main web of Chinese culture. Even in these pictures the hunter was usually represented as a foreigner and not a Chinese. Of the various artists who

treated this subject perhaps the most noted is Chao Mêng-fû, a Chinese, who took service under the first Mongol emperor.

Yet the love of the horse, which is so closely associated with sport, dates from earliest times in China, and its artistic possibilities were long understood. During Han times, we are told in Hirth's translation of the 'Story of Chang Ch'ien,' tribute was paid by surrounding nomad tribes in thousands of horses, and near-by countries were combed for magnificent specimens of horse-flesh with which to catch the emperor's eye. To such famous horses were given the flower names of 'Dragon-like,' the 'Purple Swallow,' and the 'Phœnix-Headed.' Tu Fu, one of the three greatest poets of China, devotes a celebrated poem to the technique of horse-painting.

Tradition gives the name of Lu T'an-wei as an eminent horse-painter of Han times, and successive dynasties add other illustrious names. The T'ang Dynasty produced Han Kan, and his scarcely less famous master Ts'ao Pa. The emperor of his day, Ming Huang, is said to have had forty thousand horses in his stables. Han Kan studied them assiduously, and portrayed them under all sorts of conditions: being trained for polo (a game introduced under the T'ang), being exercised by grooms, or gamboling in the fields. In these horse portraits, for such they were, the manes are carefully combed, the coats are curried and the heads are almost human in their expressiveness. Often beside the animals was presented their proud owner, but quite subordinate in importance, glowing with affectionate admiration. One of the most famous paintings of this period was the 'Eight Horses of Ming Huang.'

In Sung times, Li Lung-mien was regarded as the greatest horse-painter of the period, though he was equally great as a painter of other subjects.

With the coming of the Mongol Empire, a fresh interest arose in horses, infused by the nomad's invariable love for the beast on which his life and safety so much depend. Chao Mêng-fû, already mentioned as a painter of huntmen, was even more noted as a painter of horses. His work is considered worthy to rank with Han Kan's. One of his most famous paintings is 'The Eight Horses in the Park of Kublai Khan,' a somewhat kindred subject to the famous 'Eight Horses of Ming Huang' so often treated in preceding centuries. A fragment of a copy of this painting is in the Louvre and is all that we have to show the mastery of the original. Laurence Binyon believes that very few of the paintings now in European and American collections are actually from his brush. With the exception of that of the Ming painter, Ch'iu Ying, his signature was the one most frequently forged by the later 'manufacturers' of masterpieces.

There were many famous painters of animals other than horses: Yen Li-pên, Wei Wu-t'ien, and Ch'ê Hung of the T'ang; Tung Yüan of the Sung; Ch'ien Shun-chü and Chao Tan-liu of the Yüan; and Lu Chi and Wu Wei of the Ming — to name only a few of the most prominent.

'The Brushing of the Elephant,' painted by Yen Li-pên in T'ang times, seems to have been the prototype of numerous later pictures of the subject, many of which are still in existence. It shows a man with a besom sweeping the back of an elephant while some priests look on.

The Fawn, deer or doe as it is variously called in the English titles of Chinese paintings, is very frequently painted both as a companion of the Taoist deities or alone in conjunction with a peach tree. It betokens joy, longevity, and prosperity.

The Monkey usually conveys in its painted presentation a little element of merriment. It is looked upon as the controller of hobgoblins, and is considered a very gentle and beneficent creature. A painting of it betokens a wish for health and success. It is considered a Buddhist symbol, and its meaning in this connection comes from the saying of the Zen master Hsüeh-fêng (A.D. 822-908), while watching some of these little animals at play. 'Even these tiny creatures carry their little Buddha-mirrors at their hearts.'

The Fox was supposed to live a thousand years and become white at half that period.

The Hare is the symbol of the moon, and is usually portrayed with a laurel, as an autumn picture in the series of the Four Seasons. It is said to live a thousand years and like the fox to turn white when half that time had passed. The red hare was supposed to be a supernatural creature who appeared as an auspicious omen when the empire was well governed. The Taoist legend makes the hare the servitor of the Immortals who pounds the drugs to make the elixir of life.

The Bull is used as the symbol of idyllic rural life. The painting of a herd boy on its back, a subject frequently treated, symbolizes the triumph of intelligence over force. Like so many other symbols it has both a Taoist and a Buddhist use. Taoist deities are seen riding upon it, while in Zen mystic painting there is a series of

ten paintings illustrating a poem or rather parable in ten verses. The parable which teaches the transitoriness of things, recounts the search of a man for his bull: after long tracking, he catches sight of it and finally captures it; he rides home in triumph and stables it carefully; but next morning when he comes to look at it, the place is empty.

Rams were often painted by the Chinese artist, and personify the revivifying powers of spring. In these, as many of their other animal pictures, the Chinese frequently inject an element of humor in the posture of the animal itself, and their almost human knowingness.

The portrayal of the Lion in painting, so far as we know, dates from the sixth century A.D., and is the symbol of triumphant Buddhism. It was recognized as an emblem of Buddha himself, as he is referred to in the sacred texts as 'he with the lion's voice.' Huge statues of it (called 'Fo Dogs' by foreigners) are generally placed in front of Buddhist temples and of palaces. The male represents the *Yang* principle and is placed to the east, and the female, the *Yin*, and is placed to the west.

The Cat is looked upon in China as not only 'a smaller tiger,' but as a household guardian. While pet dogs were much in favor in the T'ang Dynasty, they were not commonly painted until the Sung. Two painters who won distinction for painting both these subjects were Mao Sung and his son Mao I of the South Sung Dynasty. They specialized in miniatures of kittens and puppies.

In the *Ming kung chi* there is a detailed description of the court of the Ming Dynasty with its palaces and institutions. It states that the Ming emperors were



A SEA-FISH EMERGING FROM THE WATER

By Kui K'i-p'ei of Ch'ing  
Ink sketch made with the fingers



so fond of cats that they maintained in their palace a special Court Cat House, where the favorite imperial cats were housed. Each had its own name and an honorary title such as the 'Little Servant Such and Such a One.' The painter frequently portrayed the cat in association with the peony. As the pupil of the cat's eye changes in the course of a day from round in the morning to almost a slit toward noon, and the peony opens from its dewy contracted form of early morning to full magnificence at midday it illustrates a 'hot summer noon'; and the Chinese have given such paintings an allegorical meaning, based on a punning on words, 'May you obtain wealth, honorable position, and an old age.'

The Dog, according to some authorities, has never held the same position in China as 'the friend of man' that he has in the West. He has, however, at various times at least been made a great pet of, and many artists rose to note by their portrayal of him. A pair of Pekingese dogs playing together is considered to be an appropriate gift to a husband and wife fond of dogs, as it carries the significance, 'May we live together in united joy.'

Fish are portrayed swimming in their natural element by the Chinese artist, much as our modern school of deep-sea painters are attempting to do. They are usually presented as swimming diagonally across the picture, giving a delightful sense of movement and life. Fish, in its general meaning, betokens a wish 'for more than enough' for the beholder. A pair of fish such as portrayed in the thirteenth century painting in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts symbolizes fertility. In

literature it is frequently referred to as a carrier of news between two friends. The fish as used in Buddhist paintings is the symbol of 'spiritual substance.' Kuan Yin is frequently shown carrying a basket of fish as in the noted painting in the Freer Gallery in Washington. An interesting parallel might be drawn between the symbolism of the fish in Chinese and European religious usages. A painting of a carp is used as a boy's festival emblem. 'The idea is that as the carp swims up the river against the current, so will the sturdy boy, overcoming all obstacles make his way in the world and rise to fame and fortune.' Such pictures were presented to candidates in the civil service examinations, to wish them good luck. The carp who overcomes the waterfall illustrates the successful candidate.

Flower and bird painting are closely akin to landscape-painting, and the technique that produced one, fathered the other.

## CHAPTER IX

### LANDSCAPE-PAINTING

LANDSCAPE-PAINTING seems to be the highest art expression that the culture and civilization of any nation has yet achieved. It is always the last art to mature, possibly because it is sophisticated man's attempt to escape from the trammels of the environment he has created for himself, and lose himself in something greater and more universal.

Chinese landscapes, while apparently the most easily understood of all their art forms on account of their decorative beauty and universality of subject, are in reality their most illusive. For in this, as in all their art expressions, there is a surface and an inner meaning. The Chinese themselves say that their art reached its zenith, both technically and philosophically, in their landscapes; while Western critics consider them the greatest the world has yet produced.

The chasm between Chinese and Western art and thought forms is even more apparent here than elsewhere. Opposition between man and Nature has been long ingrained in our Western thought; and it is only comparatively recently that we have ceased to regard her as other than a cruel, almost malignant force, ready to overwhelm us the moment we are off our guard. Great rocks and lonely valleys filled us with awe and terror. It is scarcely two hundred years since we have felt on sufficiently intimate terms with her to paint her portrait, in her different moods, i.e., pure landscapes.

The Chinese artist, on the contrary, has, for centuries, regarded himself only as one of the many manifestations of Nature. He looked upon the world with interest rather than fear, and strove to portray Nature with the reverence he did his deities. He delighted in her every changing mood, whether it be the gentle calm of summer or the destructive storm of winter, the peaceful valley or the unscalable mountain peak, whose grandeur suggests Infinity. He saw in them equally the eternal in the actual.

When Chinese art was culminating in the great landscapes of the Sung period, the landscapes of Europe had not yet developed beyond the point of pretty backgrounds for saints and Biblical characters. Even when we freed ourselves sufficiently to paint landscape as landscape, we did not venture far afield, but clung to the portrayal of farm scenes and the peaceful suburbs of cities. We conceived of landscape almost entirely as the backgrounds for the lives and deeds of men and women. The many manifestations of Nature were but the adjuncts of their lives: the earth for their feet, the trees to shade them, the rivers for their refreshment or service. We put into all these scenes a sense of ownership. Not until Claude Lorraine began to paint his pure landscapes, was Nature, divorced from our lives, regarded as a subject for the painter's brush. The Chinese never looked upon landscape solely as a background for figures; they were regarded on the contrary simply as an incident of landscape.

This age-old belief of the Chinese in the beauty and profound significance of every manifestation of Nature found expression as early as the fourth century A.D. when

landscape-painting in China was still in its infancy. The love of the country had already strongly manifested itself. Men sought to escape from the dirt and noise of the cities, their restricting formalities and conventions. This tendency was given a religious coloring by the Taoist legends which emphasized Nature and the cult of the 'open spaces.' When Buddhism came into popular favor, it still further intensified this natural trend, for it stressed the need for meditation, and placed its monasteries upon the mountain sides. Both religions had celestial beings, their Immortals or their Lohans, who dwelt far from the haunts of man. By Sung times this love of Nature had developed into a deep, intimate, yet universal emotion such as has never so far found expression in Western painting. The nearest we have come to it is in Western literature in the rather platonistic approach of such men as Wordsworth, and the more virile attitude of the recent Latin-American poets Dario and Chocano, who have caught something of the magnificence of the Andes in their verse.

The influence of the Zen or Ch'an sect of Buddhism, which was very popular during Sung times, still further intensified this belief, and probably largely motivated the magnificent Sung landscapes.

The Chinese regard a landscape as a means of escaping from one's surroundings and losing one's self in the Infinite. Kuo Hsi, one of the greatest landscape painters and a critic of note of the Sung period said in this regard:

'Though impatient to enjoy life amidst the luxuries of Nature, most people are debarred from indulging in such pleasure. To meet this want artists have endeavored to represent landscapes so that people may be able

to behold the grandeur of Nature without stepping outside their houses.'

The earliest pure landscape-painting which is still in existence, so far as we know, is the landscape scene in the 'Admonitions of the Instructress in the Palace' attributed to Ku K'ai-chih of the fourth century. It was not, however, until many centuries later, in T'ang times, that landscape rose high in popular favor and a new style of painting developed. It was during this period that the two great schools of Chinese landscape-painting had their inception, the Northern and Southern Schools as they have been called. According to Bin-yon the fundamental difference between these two schools was a difference of race and geographical surroundings. In the North the scenery about the great Huang Ho (Yellow River) was vast and sublime, with immense plains and great mountain ranges. As in every nation, the Northern inhabitants of a country are more rugged and virile than the Southern, so there was a great difference between the North Chinese, often under the sway of barbarians and the more luxury-loving South Chinese, with their long entrenched native culture. In the South, too, the landscape of the valley of the Yangtze, while it had steep gorges and high pinnacles, was romantic and picturesque. The two schools naturally showed the influence of such widely different environments in their paintings.

As time went on, this differentiation became not so much one of locality as of style. A painter, wherever born, used the style most congenial to his temperament; and some even used now one and then the other, according to which he thought suited best to his subject

or his own mood. The Northern School, broadly speaking, was characterized by a virile sternness, sublimity, and strength; the Southern School by grace, beauty, and delicate refinement, aiming to present the romantic aspects of the subject in response to an emotional mood. Li Ssü-hsün, a rival of Wu Tao-tzü for the emperor's favor, was the founder of the Northern school, while Wang Wei, who was even more famous for his poetry than his painting, fathered the Southern. His school was known as the 'literary man's school,' and in subsequent generations became the paramount fashion.

The most marked technical difference between these two schools, according to both Chinese and Japanese critics, is in their methods of treating mountain wrinkles or *tsün*. These were based upon a minute and careful study of line, and complete control of the brush stroke. Each line was regulated by a carefully thought-out position of the brush, being sharp and concise or broad and quivering at the dictate of the artist's will. With the change of pressure on the brush, the ink spread in broad masses or thinned to delicate shades without the flow of the line itself being interrupted. This has given to the work of the Chinese artist a sweep and rhythm such as has never been attained in the West. It is asserted by tradition that Wu Tao-tzü had such a complete mastery of his brush that he could draw a perfect halo with one sweep of his arm. He is accredited also with introducing a flexible brush stroke that was capable of passing in one unbroken line from solid mass to a hair line, and from a rough-edged stroke to a smooth, sleek one.

This interest in line refined itself into many subdivi-

sions. While it was used in the portrayal of rocks, trees, and other natural objects, it found its most notable subdivisions in the strokes used in the mountain wrinkles of the Northern and Southern Schools of landscape-painting. Sixteen different strokes were used to outline these curves or wrinkles. They were not arbitrary but founded upon the careful, almost scientific, observation of geological formations. Sei Ichi Taki, the well-known Japanese critic of Chinese art states: 'The ancient Chinese artist made exhaustive investigations of the subject and laid down elaborate rules, consecrated by the sanction of the ages. None of the treatments are to be regarded as the product of idle fancy, for they were really thought-out from actual observances of Nature.'

These sixteen strokes were known by expressive and picturesque titles such as the hemp-fiber stroke, veins of a lotus leaf, raveled rope, thunder head, bullock's hair, eddying water, and so on. The Northern School used the ax cuts, the alum crystal strokes, and similar rugged ones; the Southern employed the hemp-fiber, the lotus vein, the thunder head, and the other more graceful strokes. Some painters practiced both methods: Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung of the Five Dynasties; Li Chêng and Fan K'uan of Sung; and Wu Chên of the Yüan and Ch'êng Chou of the Ming. But this mingling of the two was not conducive to the great art that the strict adherence to either style produced. In T'ang times, of course, these differences were not so strongly marked; and it was not until the Sung, that they solidified into these definitely recognizable forms. (Since there are few if any authenticated T'ang landscapes for comparison, this statement must be considered as only tentative.)



LANDSCAPE  
By Hsia Kung of Sung



Many of the greatest landscapes were painted in monochrome, which reached its zenith during the Sung Dynasty. It is claimed that so great was the skill of the painters that the ink tones partook of the quality of color. The most famous practitioners of this 'ink painting' were Li Chêng, Fan Kuan, Kuo Hsi, Su Tung, and Su Kuo of the Northern Sung School; the Ma family, Hsia Kuei, Liang K'ai, Mu-ch'i, Mi Fei, Mi Yu-jên of the Southern Sung; Huang Kung-wang and Fang Fang-hu of the Yüan; and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang of the Ming.

Their philosophy of the *Yin-Yang* principle found expression in their paintings in the law of balance, the negative and positive effects. In the presentation of two tigers, for example, one had its mouth open, the other shut; of two dragons, one ascended, the other descended; mountains, waves, rocks, trees, and even the petals of a flower had their positive and negative aspects. This principle, however, found its widest application in their use of light and dark. It has been called 'notan' by the Japanese; Western critics, among them Laurence Binyon, apply to it our Western art term 'chiaroscuro'; but none of these seem to convey the idea as well as Fenollosa's term 'light and dark beauty.' If we may trust the description in the *Hua shih hui yao*, when speaking of the work of Emperor Hui Tsung, it involves a massing of contrasted light and dark masses. It says 'he used one tone of dry ink without gradations, getting the effects of density where required by letting less of the ground show.'

Contrast of light and shade is one of the great tests of mastery in every art. William E. Gates in analyzing

and contrasting the qualities of the Eastern and Western methods, says:

'With us in the West it is developed by means of the shadows incidental to our methods of perspective and representation of the "round." It could not exist but for our admission of the sculptural element, the "three dimensional" into our plane surface pictures. Chiaroscuro, our name for this quality, is thus tied to these conditions of shadows just as our form and distance is monocular perspective; and this however much the master artist may draw on color combinations to help. The correspondence of chiaroscuro in Eastern art is a "light-dark" balance which does not derive at all from shadow, but depends solely on the requirements of harmony and rhythm. When we remember that the art is always "a recognized representation on a flat surface"; the perspective aerial instead of geometric; the brush-work always potentially at least calligraphic — bearing the rhythm of life and form in the stroke instead of the rounded flesh; as well as the great evolution of monochrome as a result of the attained fluidity or richness of the flat color — even brush-used ink, a thing hardly attempted in the West — remembering all this, with many other harmonic qualities sought in Eastern composition, we will see the necessity for using a different term.'

Wu Tao-tzü was severely criticized by T'ang critics for his deficiency in its use. Hsia Kuei, on the contrary, is lauded as such a master of it that his ink is said to have taken all the qualities of real color. Ma Yüan used it by massing wet blacks against the mist.

As the Chinese do not use shadow as we do to bring

out the contour of an object, they have had to depend solely upon line. This might be expected to lead to a certain flatness, but as Ferguson says, it was only when used by poor artists that this occurred. 'It must be conceded that many Chinese painters leave the impression of flatness, but it will be found on careful examination to be due to the failure of the artist — not the fault of the method — to obtain harmony of line and color. This is the correct explanation, and not lack of chiaroscuro, to which it is often assigned. When there is proper balance in composition and coloring, there is no flatness. When there is it is a sign of inferior work.'

The laws of composition as employed by the Chinese have been carried to a higher point of development than in the West. They may be said to have achieved the perfect rhythm of composition. For many centuries in the West we built our compositions on the triangle, the circle, and the 'S' forms, taking as our ideal that the attention of the spectator must follow from one high light to another until it comes back to the starting-point, thus achieving what we considered balance. Our idea of unity required that one central figure or point in the painting should focus our attention to the subordination of the others. In this latter the Western painter was influenced by the scientific ideas of light and the laws of optics that came into acceptance with the Renaissance. These declare that our eyes are not capable of seeing a given scene in all its details at once. The painter, adopting this theory to his composition, arranged his painting by means of light and color, so that the eye of the spectator should be focused automatically upon a single point. The Chinese artist had too free a spirit to

subscribe to such limitations. His idea of composition was such that if his paintings contained more than one object, or grouping of objects, as in his hand-scrolls, whether they be figures or landscapes, a spectator can cut the picture at any point as his pleasure dictates and still see a perfectly balanced composition. The landscapes of a certain painter were so perfect in this respect that it has been claimed for them that they 'seemed continuous from where the spectator sat.' An excellent example of this rhythmic composition is to be seen in the arrangement of the figures in the hand-scroll in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts attributed to the Emperor Hui Tsung, called 'The Preparation of the Silk.' It consists of eleven female figures engaged in the preparation of silk, yet it can be cut into groupings of one, two, three, four figures or more without breaking its continuity. Even more powerful and much more subtle is the Chinese painter's handling of this rhythmic balance in landscapes.

In the West our paintings are designed for a definite eye-line; but the Chinese artist does not presume to dictate to the onlooker at what angle his picture shall be viewed. A painting is hung flat against the wall, or unrolled upon a table; and the spectator is expected to walk around it and view it from any angle that pleases him — from above, as from a hillside, from below, or from either side. It is the isometric convention as opposed to our linear.

The use of perspective in Chinese art is another matter that has been much misunderstood in the West. In our efforts to see things drawn upon a flat surface as having more than two dimensions, we have developed







LADIES PREPARING NEWLY WOVEN SILK

Attributed to the Emperor Hui Tsung of Sung



DETAIL FROM THE HAND SCROLL OF NINE HORSES

By Chao Meng-fu, Yuan



a convention of representing them in receding plains — the picture of a physical object portrayed on a flat surface as seen by a single eye from a single point in space. This has led to a series of conventions of perspective that are purely arbitrary, such as that of two parallel lines meeting on the horizon, a convention which is quite opposed to fact, since parallel lines never meet, and even granting that they seem to meet from the visual viewpoint, their point of contact is not on the horizon, but above it as every surveyor knows, owing to the curvature of the earth's surface. Other of our uses of perspective are quite as arbitrary and conventional.

Inhibited by our own conventions we have found difficulty in accepting those of the Chinese. Our own artists have not however as rigidly adhered to ours as some of our art critics would have us believe. Many a great master-painter of the West has been able more or less imperceptibly to modify his perspective in a painting from the monocular theory to something like a binocular. Rubens in one of his pictures uses shadows cast in two directions and in another he employs more than one form of perspective.

To the Chinese our idea of perspective, the placing of large objects in the foreground and smaller ones in gradations in the background, is naïve and almost childish. According to their view such space can be measured, and space that can be measured limits the imagination. Many Chinese painters of the eighth and tenth centuries left treatises on the methods of portraying objects in space. Wang Wei, the T'ang painter, perhaps, most nearly approximates our view. He says: 'In painting landscape, the first thing is to proportion

your mountains in tens of feet, your trees in feet, your horses in inches, and your human figures in tenths of inches. Distant men have no eyes, distant trees no branches, distant hills no rocks but are indistinct like eyebrows, and distant water no waves, but reaches up and touches the sky.... If there is rain, heaven and earth should be indistinguishable, and the east and west unrecognizable.'

In place of our one accredited perspective, the Chinese have a number of planes or perspectives that give opportunity for a great variety of effects. Kuo Hsi in his famous treatise on landscape-painting mentions three kinds of distance — in height, in depth, and in a plane. He says: 'In mountains there are three sorts of distances, that of looking up to the top from below is height, that of looking toward its back from its front is called depth, and that of looking from near mountains at distant mountains is called the distance of flatness.'

All through Chinese thought there is found the philosophy of the relation of Heaven, Earth, and Man. It finds expression in their architecture, in their garden arrangements, in their flower-placing (just as it does in the Japanese), and above all in their landscape-paintings. The ones that embody this relationship are known as the Three Level Paintings. The highest mountain represents Heaven; the middle rocks, Earth; and the little intimate things such as human figures, animals, boats, trees, and houses, Man, — 'all with one life shining through, binding all together — as above so below.' Such paintings they consider to fulfill 'unity in variety.'

Another form of perspective much in vogue was from

the large to the small, the near to the far, the *Aerial Perspective*, in which the painting is looked down into as if the spectator were on a neighboring height. Sometimes this height was from a mountain as in the great scroll in the Freer Gallery formerly attributed to Ma Yuan; sometimes it is from over the roofs of buildings as in the painting in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts showing Yang Kuei-fei and the Emperor Ming Huang riding in the imperial gardens.

Still another form is the one in which the spectator is below and looks up into the picture.

In addition to these there is the most common one of all in which the spectator simply looks into the painting on a level.

This skillful and exquisite blending of composition and perspective gave to their paintings a perfect unity that made it possible to look at them from any angle: below, above, or from either side, at the will of the beholder without breaking their symmetry or marring their beauty.

By intellectualizing not only form but space, and by the adroit use of these various perspectives, the Chinese learned to suggest vast distances in their paintings. In fact by the time Kuo Hsi wrote his treatise on the landscape art, vast distances — ‘far off effects’ — were considered essential to the unity of a painting. (The popularity of this method caused the final divorce of calligraphy and painting, as one was built on line and the other on tone.) Space never meant emptiness as it so often does in the painting of the West, but was an essential part of the composition. It was used in a manner analogous to their declaration in regard to poetry that

when the words cease the meaning flows on. They obtained by its use an inexpressible richness in calm and reposefulness. It led the thoughts of the onlooker into the non-visible — that non-visible that plays such an important part in Chinese thought and is typified by Lao-tzū's illustration of the vessel whose utility depends on its non-visible hollowness.

The entrancing and almost inexplicable charm of their landscapes is due, in addition to their tranquillity, to the fact that they do not convey a set impression of a certain scene at a given moment — as many Western landscapes do — but interpret a mood and suggest that eternity and the moment are one.

Nor did the Chinese painter confine himself solely to the presentation of peace; he joyed quite as greatly — especially in the Sung period — in the presentation of Nature at her wildest, rain and snow, wind that bends the bamboo, sweeps the bird from his haunts, and lashes man before it. A powerful example of storm is portrayed in the hand-scroll attributed to Tai Chin at the Freer Gallery. There man, trees, and elements writhe under one mighty outburst of Nature; yet there is nothing in it of the horror that survived in cultivated European thought until a century or so ago when confronted by the unleashed powers of Nature.

Clouds, rain, mist — water in every form — was carefully studied, and endlessly portrayed by the Chinese artist. Kuo Hsi in his treatise makes a minute study of the aspects of clouds in the varying seasons: 'In spring they are mild and calm, in summer thick and brooding; in autumn rare and thin; in winter gray and dark.'



THREE-LEVEL LANDSCAPE

By Kuo Hsi of Ming



His descriptions of water are no less minute: 'Water is a living thing, hence its form is deep and quiet, or soft and smooth, or broad and oceanlike, or thick like flesh or circling like wings, or jetting and slender, rapid and violent like an arrow, rich as a fountain flowing afar, making waterfalls, weaving mists upon the sky, or running down into the earth where fishermen lie at ease.'

No landscape is complete without some suggestion of water — a stream, a waterfall, a lake or a river — for the Chinese characters for landscape, *shan shui*, signify mountains and water.

In his dissertation on mountains Kuo Hsi says they 'make of water their blood, grass and trees their hair, and mist and clouds their divine coloring. Water makes of a mountain its face, houses and fences its eyebrows and eyes, and of fishermen its soul.'

The fisherman, the hermit sage, the religious recluse meditating on space do indeed form the soul of many a great Chinese painting. They painted them in endless variety and they seem as much a part of their landscapes as its rocks and trees. Two subjects were particular favorites with the painter, one the 'Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove,' an association of convivial men of letters who met in the third century A.D. for relaxation and learned discourses in a bamboo grove; and the other the Lan Ting Hsü or 'Orchard Pavilion,' as it is usually translated, the rendezvous of a group of distinguished scholars of the fourth century, whose compositions in prose and verse were transcribed by the celebrated calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih and so attained immortality.

All landscapes must of necessity portray some phase of the passing seasons. The Chinese made minute and exhaustive studies of their varying characteristics. Wang Wei in the notes he left on painting goes at great length into the various aspects of the landscape when seen in the morning, at noon, and in the evening; in spring, summer, autumn, and winter — and points out the various characteristics of each. Spring was characterized by joyousness, summer by greenness and mists, autumn by abundance, and winter by drowsiness and cold.

Closely associated with landscape-painting, while not strictly of it, was the art of architectural painting, pagodas and palaces. Kuo Chung-shu of the Five Dynasties was particularly famous for his pagodas and palaces set among the hills. He is credited with having invented the *chieh-hua* or boundary painting which means painting in straight lines.\*

At the Freer Gallery is an excellent example of architectural painting. It is a scroll attributed to Li Lung-mien. A recent painter whose fame is based on his proficiency in this line is Chu Pao-king of the Ch'ing Dynasty.

The hand-scroll gave the Chinese painter his greatest opportunity in landscape-painting, for here in one great sweeping conception he could portray Nature in every mood. As in the scroll in the Freer Gallery, formerly attributed to Ma Yüan, sunlight steeps the distance,

\* There seems to be a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the term 'boundary painting' as used by the Chinese. Dr. Ferguson insists that the term was used in connection with buildings, while Dr. Giles takes the position that 'boundary paintings' means pictures designed for a certain space. Dr. Berthold Laufer agrees with this latter definition.,

water ripples softly, then, in turn, the scene is closed in by the towering crags and walls of a ravine, opens out into wide horizons and boats at rest upon a lake, tiny villages nestling among the hills, reeds swaying in the mists and tall pines outlined against the sun; so the thoughts of the onlooker are caused to pass from the pleasant vicissitudes of earth, through moments of grandeur, on into the contemplation of the Infinite. It is as if Nature herself were unfolding before us a succession of scenes analogous to the experiences of the soul. These great landscape scrolls with their continuous undertones of rhythm, their superb contrasts, their gracious peace, and moments of remote majesty, resemble nothing in the West save our great tonal masterpieces.

Tu Fu, the Chinese poet, embodied a little of their wonder in his poem on a landscape hand scroll of Wang Ts'ai:

Ten days to paint a mountain  
And as many again for a rock?  
The true artist works slowly  
And Wang Wei is a master of his art.

Here are the K'un-lun mountains,  
Here the village of Pa Ling  
It seems as if I can even hear  
The noises in its streets.

Here is the lake of Tung-t'ing  
Ending in a silver thread of river.  
The wind sighs in the trees,  
Clouds gather.  
Will that lone fisherman,  
Rowing so desperately,  
Reach shelter in time?

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How wonderful is a landscape scroll;  
Ten inches of paper that is all,  
And a thousand places live.  
Would I could cut off a tiny square  
Of this marvellous painting!  
The kingdom of Wu and the province of Sung,  
They would content me.

To summarize the characteristics of the various periods: The T'ang artists painted human and religious subjects more than they did landscapes; but when they did portray them they gave to them a large elemental sweep. The Sung had a peculiar intimacy with Nature such as was attained at no other time and were full of pure poetry. The Yüan landscapes were richer in mystical qualities than the Sung which became conventional toward the end of the dynasty. The Ming seem less near to us, less modern than the Sung; their romantic feeling soon deteriorated into the elaborate and the ornate. The Ch'ing, while producing painters of ability did not depart in any way from the tradition of their predecessors and embodied no new characteristics.

## CHAPTER X

### THE COLLECTOR AND HIS PROBLEM

THERE are two ways of approaching Chinese art, as indeed all other arts; one judges the painting by the famous name attached to it, the other by its intrinsic beauty. By the former method the collector gains his enjoyment from a belief; by the latter from the greatness of the painting itself. The collector who would measure Chinese art solely by the first standard is faced by many difficulties. He falls into the error the old Chinese treatises so often warned against; he is criticizing by 'the ear' and judging by 'the sound.'

Chinese painting dates back something like fifteen hundred years, while with us, if we ascribe its beginning to Giotto, our present-day art is comparatively of recent date. Yet already we are having difficulty in definitely authenticating certain pictures. A notable incident of the uncertainty that is attached to even a historically known subject is that of the two portraits of Philip IV of Spain by Velasquez. Each was claimed at one time by its respective museum, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan, as the original. We find difficulty even in authenticating some of the work of so nearly a contemporary painter as Gilbert Stuart. It is not surprising then that the same problem faces the collector of Chinese art.

One of the first difficulties the collector-by-the-ear has to meet is that of signature. Many of the finest Chinese paintings are unsigned. According to the early Chinese

artist's point of view, an unsigned painting was intended to stand on its worth and to speak for itself. Or as the proud boast of a Sung painter had it 'My picture is my signature.' If it did not authenticate itself as being from his brush by the manner in which it was painted, no signature could prove its genuineness. It is said that the majority of the Sung and pre-Sung painters did not put their signatures on their paintings, with the notable exception of Mi Fei and a few others. Many of them, occasionally, however, wrote a little poem on the scroll in a set number of characters and signed this. In the Yüan Dynasty the custom of signing came into more general favor, and by the Ming, the artist who did not sign was the exception.

The next fact that the 'collector-by-the-ear' must consider is the Chinese attitude toward the copyist. Copying of the great masters was a recognized and legitimate part of any artist's work. Such a copyist had no intention of plagiarism or deception, even though he carried his copying to the extent of including the signature, the seals, and the attestations of the original. His purpose was to express his admiration for the masterpiece by reproducing it. His copying was interpretative rather than literal. He was like a virtuoso who while rendering as faithfully as possible the creations of the great musicians, yet at the same time expresses his own personality. One of the Chinese critics in writing on the subject says:

'The practice of copying the works of the earlier artists began with Hsieh Ho; and this method subsequently became, from its easiness of execution, a kind of royal road, though it was found to be difficult to transfer the



TEN HORSES  
By Pei Kuen of T'ang



COPY OF THE TEN HORSES  
By Chao Meng-fu of Yüan



inspiration. True copying consists in studying the thought, not the lines, of a picture. Thus Chü Jan, Mi Fei, Huang Kung-wang, and Ni Yü all studied Tung Yüan, but each after his own particular fashion; whereas a common mind would have copied the model slavishly, line for line, without of course achieving success.'

An interesting example of this free-interpreting is the 'Ten Horses' in the Metropolitan Museum, the original attributed to Pei Kuen of T'ang, the copy to the famous Chao Meng-fu of Sung.

Such a copyist was, of course, as great as the men he reproduced. But such was not always true. The great majority of the copyists were Academicians, men of ability but not of genius. They made the painstaking copying of the great masterpieces their life work, and achieved such fame in this line that many of their names are included in the lists of the painters of China. Waley in his 'Index of Chinese Artists' mentions a number of them. The attaching of the name of some popular great painter, such as Ma Yuan, Mi Fei, or Han Kan, to a painting became as a consequence merely a convention. It was not intended to mean that the painting was by a certain man or even by one of his disciples. It might mean either that it was a copy of his painting or that it was only done in 'his style.' Such copies are fairly easy of identification. The ones that are a constant source of doubt and anxiety to the collector-by-the-ear, are those made by some master-painter of a great painting. The marks of his genius are so apparent in the copy.

The Academician copyists have rendered, however, an inestimable service to Chinese art. It is often through their work alone that something of the magnificence of

the early masterpieces can be sensed now that the originals are lost. Greek art in the West is in much the same position. The beauties of Praxiteles, of Phidias, and of Polyclites would be largely unknown to us, now that the originals no longer exist, if it were not for the copies, the replicas that have come down to us. Greek art, as John La Farge suggests, will live 'even though its very physical existence is obliterated, because it is built in the mind, in the eternal'; in the same way the master-works of the early Chinese painters live in the works of successive generations.

The Chinese differ from the West in that the 'school' of a painter is not necessarily confined to the men of his own time. A Ch'ing painter might so admire the work of Mi Fei that he would train himself to paint in his style; such a man would be classed as belonging to Mi Fei's school.

In order to avoid false attribution, many of our museums have adopted a middle course, and ascribe most of their paintings to dynasties rather than to some particular painter, unless there is both external and internal evidence to point unmistakably to its being from his brush. One of the museums even carries the matter a step further, and lists its collection under the heads of 'originals,' 'attributed to,' 'a copy of,' 'in the style of' and 'after the design of,' the last term being used to denote a copy of a copy, made perchance hundreds of years after the original and so far removed from it that it resembles it only in design.

In quite a different class from the copyist, though unfortunately one that cannot be ignored, is the intentional forger. He is common to all countries, and the

collector of European art suffers from him as much as the collector of Chinese. China produced many of the highest skill. Waley mentions a family of the Ch'ing Dynasty whose ability almost amounted to genius and who forged innumerable masterpieces. On such forgeries nothing is missing, signature, numerous seals, autographs and attestations of noted owners or great scholars who admired the painting. They are too much 'authenticated' and one is led to distrust their genuineness, for to paraphrase an old saying, they do protest too much. The unsigned painting without seals is much preferable and gives a greater certainty of age. Such forgeries were painted whenever possible on old silk, if new silk had to be used it was aged with tea, washing, or the action of some chemical. In fact the methods used did not differ very materially from those used by the Western forger of *objets d'art*.

It will soon be easier to distinguish the work of these parasites of art; for just as in Western art, the X Ray and the finger-print system are being used to authenticate a doubtful European masterpiece, so science is coming to the aid of the collector of Chinese art and making a study of the silks, inks, paints, and papers used at different periods. This will assist, too, in dating paintings difficult of attribution. While it is possible that a Ming picture might have been painted on Sung silk or paper, it is very improbable that the ink or colors used would be of the same chemical formation as those employed in the former period.

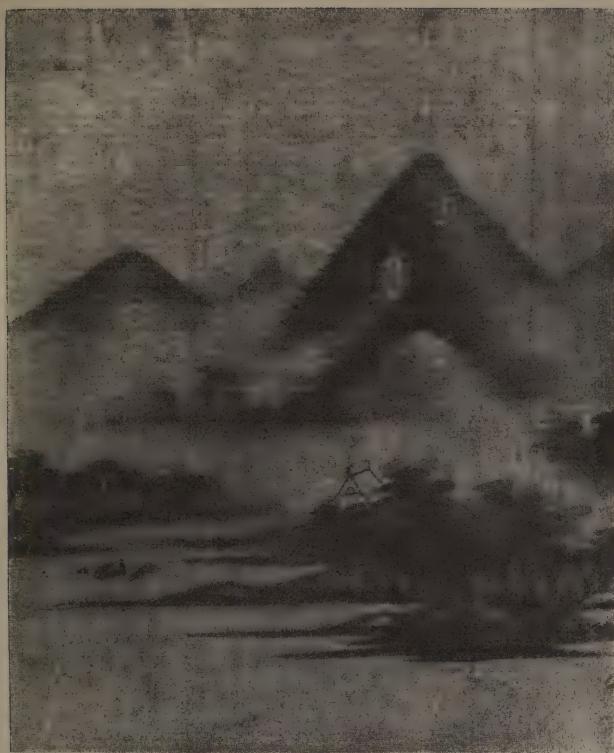
The calligraphy on a painting constitutes even more of a problem than the painting itself, as it was even more easily imitated and forged. It includes not only attesta-

tions, the comments the painter often attached to his work, but his signature. A painter often used more than one name in signing his pictures. Li Lung-mien is a noteworthy example of the use of special names at different periods. Mi Fei, too, signed his pictures and calligraphy in various ways and used different seals to accompany the various signatures. Sometimes these seals read *Hsiu Mao Mi Fei*, alluding to the year of his birth, again 'Mi Fei's Seal' or the 'Seal of the pure pleasures of Mi.'

In speaking of the seal as employed by the collector, Waley makes this comment, 'Collectors' seals are of value only when the owner in question happened to be a man of importance; otherwise it is impossible to discover any facts about him.'

Nothing like the time and attention has been given to Chinese paintings by Western scholars, that they have lavished on the ceramics. Their scientific minds have found little assistance in the Chinese writings upon the subject as they contain, as a usual thing, lists of paintings, and biographies, enlivened by anecdotes, many of them obviously legendary, and do not deal at all with the subject from the analytical angle we are accustomed to in the West.

While we need the assistance of these scholars to clear up for us the many mooted questions of Chinese art, we must never lose sight of the fact that it is *art* that is being discussed, and that art is like the butterfly's wing, its ephemeral beauty is lost in the dissecting-room. Chinese art cannot be approached solely with the head; the emotions must play a major rôle in its comprehension and appreciation. It is more akin to music than to



LANDSCAPE  
By Mi Fei of Sung



our plastic arts. In estimating its greatness, its emotional appeal must be the first consideration.

The collector who relies on beauty needs no critic or scholar to attest for him the greatness of a Chinese painting of the first rank, whether signed or unsigned. It speaks for itself by its supreme proportions and the rhythms eloquent of a master-mind. (A great work always reflects the great thought that produced it.) There is an honesty about such paintings that commands our involuntary homage. They are complete to the minutest detail; nothing is slighted, each detail is thought completely through. Yet so masterly is the skill that none of the sweep is lost, none of the greatness of conception. It is only on the closest examination that the onlooker becomes aware of this meticulousity, so convincing and powerful is the main conception, so arresting to the attention.

The charming confession of an eminent Sung critic, 'In my young days I praised the painter whose pictures I liked, but as my judgment matured, I praised myself for liking what the master had chosen to have me like' might be paraphrased by the collector to read, 'In my inexperience I relied on names, but as my judgment matured, I praised myself for liking that which was great in itself.' The fundamental value of a picture, after all, lies in its appeal to that something deep within us which John La Farge recognizes when he says, 'Fashions change as to feelings and sentiments and ways of looking at the world. . . . He (a painter) is great because he is the same as man has been and will be; and we recognize without knowing them by name, our ancestral primordial predilections.'

## CHAPTER XI

### CHINESE INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF THE WEST

THE full extent of Chinese influence upon the West, and upon European civilization in particular, cannot be known until trained Chinese scholars have combed our records of the past and analyzed our culture with the minute care that our Western scholars have devoted to the archæological discoveries and the Chinese records and inscriptions. Such a study of early Western civilization from the Eastern angle has yet to be made.

Some of the effects of Far Eastern culture, however, have been definitely traced, and much more can be inferred by what we know of the effect of the culture of the West upon the peoples of the Far East. It is known that Greek art ideals affected the art of India and that Buddhism carried these ideals in a modified form into China, while recent excavations in Upper Mongolia have revealed textiles with Greek designs, dating from before our era. Any day may announce finds that will reveal still earlier contacts. The stream that brought these Greek designs to Upper Mongolia, then in contact with, though not under Chinese sovereignty in that particular section, must have, of necessity, carried back with it an equal proportion of the already thoroughly established and highly developed culture of China—first perhaps to the Near East, then eventually to Europe itself. From the Middle Ages onward, the record is

clearer, and it is comparatively easy to trace the influence of China on the West.

Until quite recently two opposing theories were held by Western scholars as to the development of the civilization of the Far East; one that it arose quite independently of the West; the other that it had its origin in the West, and was transferred to the East by the migrations of peoples. Neither of these theories is now accepted in *toto*. It has been proved through recent archæological discoveries, that Neolithic man, in the country which is now China, had some sort of connection, including a similarity of design, with the inhabitants of the Near East and of Eastern Europe. Some scholars accounted for this similarity by saying these peoples all originated in the same place, the Near East; but this theory is fast being discredited. Paul Pelliot advances a much more tenable one: he attributes the similarities to cultural migrations rather than to a migration of peoples.

After the dawn of history, the thread that drew the East to the West was a silken one. Imperial Rome wanted silk, and China had it. Cleopatra wore robes of silk spun from Chinese silk that the Egyptians unraveled and rewove in their own designs. (Colonel Kozlov's discoveries of textiles showing Greek influence, in Mongolia, date from the first and possibly from the second century B.C. and prove how close was the inter-communication at that date.) China kept the processes of silk production a secret for centuries, and Roman writers, including Virgil, thought it was some sort of a vegetable product combed from trees. The Chinese conquest of Eastern Turkestan brought them in touch

with the Roman Orient, and we can even identify Marcus Aurelius Antoninus in the Chinese annals under the title of the Emperor An Tun. During the first century of our era, a Chinese embassy got as far as the Persian Gulf on their way to Rome; it turned back because they were terrorized at hearing of a 'kind of homesickness which men have when they are long on the sea.' The first recorded travelers from Rome to China arrived in A.D. 166.

The attempt, after the fall of Rome, to keep open the silk routes which had been practically closed by the Sassanian power in Persia, was one of the central features of the foreign policy of Justinian, A.D. 527-65, and of his immediate successors. A century later, when Asia had been divided under the two great powers, the Mohammedan in the West and the T'ang in the East, this contact was resumed. While few individuals are believed to have traveled the entire distance — though it is alleged that four thousand foreign families were established in China during the reign of Tai Tsung of T'ang — many ideas and products are known to have made the journey. Dr. Berthold Laufer has traced twenty-four agricultural products that during the course of the centuries — from the beginning of our era to the time of Kublai Khan — were carried from China to Persia and beyond, and some sixty-eight that traveled in the reverse direction from the West to the East. Pliny speaks of the peach and the apricot, both Chinese fruits, though he confuses them with their immediate 'port of entry' into Europe as Armenian and Persian. Fine glass was imported into China from the West about 600 A.D., and possibly even as early as Han times.

In post-T'ang and Sung times, militant Mohammedanism made an almost impassable barrier between the East and the West. This lasted until Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hordes swept across Asia and into Europe, carrying destruction it is true, but at the same time spreading the cultures of the various nations that they had conquered, and fertilizing one with the other. They united in one vast empire, the nearest to a world empire that has ever been achieved, China, Korea, Indo-China, Java, Persia, Russian Turkestan, Russia, and parts of Poland, Hungary, and even Germany. Roads were built, and armies mounted on fast horses were continually passing back and forth. Europe and Asia met face to face, and the great revolutionizing invention of block prints appeared in Europe. Though this conquest of the Mongols lasted but a moment in world history, it was long enough for the seeds to be sown that have separated our modern civilization from the society of the Middle Ages.

China's contribution to the West was varied. It consisted among other things of printing; a system of paper money and negotiable instruments of exchange; the mariner's compass, with the assistance of which America was discovered; and gunpowder, which was first used in fire-arms during the Sung times in China. In Europe gunpowder leveled the feudal system and created the modern citizen army. To China is attributed also the introduction of the use of coal as fuel, as well as the more authenticated gifts of silk, paper, tea, porcelain, papier mâché, and such games as those played with dominoes and with cards. These contributions have modified the civilization of the West to a tremendous

degree; it is even alleged that they furnished an impetus to the changes that resulted in the Renaissance and the Reformation, the foundation upon which our modern Western culture is built.

During the short period of the Mongol Empire, many Europeans, other than Marco Polo, visited the Mongol court. John of Plano Carpini was sent as an envoy by Pope Innocent IV in 1245, and later embassies went from Saint Louis of France in 1248 and 1253, respectively. William de Rubrugis, in his description of his journey to the East, mentions a number of Europeans by name as living at the Mongolian court. It is said that at one time Mongolian cavalry was even offered for the conquest of the Holy Sepulcher; and a Frenchman was appointed the Catholic archbishop of Peking. Peter the Great, while attempting to graft the culture of France upon his semi-savage empire, is said to have sent agents to China to study their form of government and the adaptability of their style of architecture.

Not only did Marco Polo leave a record of his impressions of China, but five narratives were written by Chinese of their visits to the West and their impressions of its culture, and published in China during the same century.

The downfall of the Mongol Empire, and the activities of the Turks again shut off China from Europe. Columbus tried unsuccessfully in 1492 to discover a water route to India and the Far East; it was not until seven years later that Vasco Da Gama rounded Africa, and still another twenty before the first Portuguese traders landed at Macao.

European interest in China was at this time almost

entirely intellectual and spiritual. The Catholic church saw in it a fertile field for missionary endeavor and sent missions to convert the 'pagans.' Fortunately these priests were men of education, capable of understanding the civilization and culture which they found. To them is due the popularity of Chinese culture in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — an appreciation that had a marked influence on the life of the time and even upon subsequent generations. Not only did their letters whet the interest of Europe in the almost fabulous country of 'Cathay,' but these were soon followed by pictures showing the life of this strange people. Between 1596 and 1598 the first Chinese portraits appeared in Holland, and within fifty years Chinese subjects had become very popular. Illustrated reports of the Dutch embassies were published, notably those by P. de Geyer and J. de Kayser (1665), which were illustrated with a hundred and fifty drawings of Chinese life, using Chinese perspective. Soon similar prints, if we may trust reports, made by French engravers, were sold at the fairs in France during the reign of Louis XIV. In 1670, '*China monumentis qua sacris qua profanis illustrata*', by Athanasius Kircher, a Jesuit, was published in Latin, but later translated into French, and became for decades the favorite of lovers of things Chinese. During this time the Catholic priests introduced the Chinese to European art, and Ch'ien Lung had sixteen drawings of his 'Battles and Victories' made between 1770-74, and sent to France to be engraved, as the art of copper engraving was unknown in China at the time. The originals of these engravings remained in Europe, and various plates were made from them apparently,

on which the European engraver did not hesitate to make additions of figures and boats. A copy of this later set is in the British Museum.

Contemporary with Father Kircher's book, the Chinese classics were translated and published, and the learned world grew to associate the word China with Confucius and political morality. La Pompadour was a Chinese enthusiast, and at her salons its strange and attractive culture was much discussed. Ku, a Chinese savant, accompanied some returned Jesuit fathers to Paris about 1750 and was a prominent figure in the intellectual world for some years. This interest in things Chinese was even carried to such absurd lengths that in 1756 Louis XV is reported to have imitated the age-old custom of the Chinese emperors, and solemnly turned the first furrow in the spring.

It was the custom of the time to speak of the 'tolerant Asiatic' and to consider the Chinese people as the prototype of the virtuous human being. Voltaire regarded them as having perfected the moral sciences. He says, 'If, as a philosopher, one wishes to instruct oneself about what had taken place on the globe, one must first of all turn one's eyes to the East, the cradle of all the arts, to which the West owes everything.' In his '*Essai sur les mœurs*' (1760) he devotes a long chapter to the Chinese. His attitude can be taken as a fair prototype of the attitude of his day.

Goethe himself was much interested in the Chinese and spent quite a little time in studying them as he attests in 1813, when he writes, 'From my return from Karlsbad onward, I devoted myself to a serious study of the Chinese Empire.' He had some little knowledge of

Chinese painting, though their use of light and dark seems to have puzzled him. Some of his plays, according to Bierdermann in his Goethe researches, show strong traces of Chinese influence, in motivation and allusions. He left some translations from the Chinese collection, 'A Hundred Poems of Beautiful Women' (*Po Mei Hsin Yung*) which were unpublished at the time of his death.

With the quarrels among the various orders of Catholic missionaries in China and the consequent curtailing of their activities, Europe's interest in the art and culture of China waned (intellectual contact had been largely through them), and a purely commercial interest took its place. It was no longer through the eyes of scholars that Europe viewed China, but through those of the trader. It is only within the last quarter of a century that the West has again awakened to the art and literature of China.

During this first enthusiasm for things Chinese, Chinese culture and design influenced almost every phase of European life, especially in the crafts.

Lacquer became the rage. Madame de Maintenon used Chinese furniture both at Versailles and the Trianon, and La Pompadour was the special patron of Robert Martin, who decorated lacquer furniture with flower and bird designs taken from Chinese models. So popular was Chinese furniture that it was offered as a prize in a royal lottery in 1689. English furniture felt the effect of it as early as the reign of William and Mary. Even in our own day lacquer furniture usually shows traces of its Chinese origin in the decorations. Chippendale and Heppelwhite furniture are of course direct results of this Chinese influence.

Nor was the use of lacquer limited to house furniture. Palanquins were made on Chinese models, and became so common that we find Molière mentioning them frequently, especially in his '*Les précieuses ridicules*' in 1659.

The introduction of 'china' (the English term for the ware which the Portuguese had called porcelain) into Europe is one of the greatest of the many contributions that China has made to Western civilization. Before it became common, food vessels were made of gold, silver, pewter, and even wood, according to the rank of the people who used them. Various pieces had found their way to Europe, through the centuries, but were treasured as curiosities and considered too precious for daily use. Madrid and Versailles both had large royal collections. It was not until the eighteenth century, however, that it became a household necessity. The East India Company was the first to introduce the less 'precious' china in large quantities and in so doing revolutionized the daily life of the Western world. The major impetus to its use was given by Louis XV when he ordered the silver plate of France melted down, and people of fashion substituted porcelain for it.

The delicate tints of the fragile K'ang Hsi porcelains appealed to the French taste; while the English and the Dutch preferred the plain blue and white porcelain with its less graceful forms. Even as early as 1699 we find Le Comte, in his work on China, complaining of the indiscriminate way European buyers were bringing in the poorer grades.

The Venetians began to manufacture Majolica as early as 1540. Curiously enough when true porcelain be-

gan to be made in Europe, the makers continued to rely upon Chinese designs to give beauty to their wares. We find Sèvres, Lowestoft, Worcester, German Meissen, and even the English Leeds ware of the eighteenth century clinging not only to Chinese figure and flower designs, but using such distinctly Chinese shapes as their temple jars and the pilgrim's bottle. To-day many of our best porcelain manufacturers pride themselves upon the use of certain Chinese designs, especially the famous Copeland.

Frequently the European artist in repeating these Chinese designs misinterpreted them, as in the well-known Meissen 'onion pattern,' which is a perversion of the Chinese pineapple motive. Another perversion, though in a lesser degree, is our modifications of the popular 'Willow pattern.'

Even the architecture of the day reflected the interest in China. Not a palace or the home of a man of wealth in the eighteenth century seems to have been considered complete unless it had a Chinese pavilion (pagoda) attached. Some of these even attempted to be replicas of the famous porcelain pagoda in Nanking.

It had an effect also on gardening and the formal gardens of the time. Addison, in discussing gardening in '*The Spectator*' in 1712, says: 'The Chinese ridicule our plantations, which are laid out by rule and line; because they say any one may plant trees in equal rows and uniform figures. They choose rather to show a genius in works of this nature, and therefore, always conceal the art by which they direct themselves.' Both he and Pope had gardens laid out in this new style with vegetables, fruit, and forest trees. The style once started spread

rapidly, and for a time it seemed as if the old-fashioned English garden would entirely disappear. Between 1750 and 1759, an architect, Sir William Chambers, who had been in the Far East, laid out a Chinese garden in the famous Kew Gardens. It became the model for similar gardens everywhere; such gardens were known in France, where they became very popular, as Chinese-English gardens. This style of gardening became an art with an encyclopedia of its own. The fad passed after a few years, however, and the old form of garden reasserted itself.

Not only did the silks manufactured in Europe continue for a long time to reflect their Chinese origin in their designs; but Chinese needle-paintings took the place of Gobelin tapestries in this Rococo period. Such well-known painters as François Boucher provided the designs for these embroideries, many of them exceeding the Gobelins in size.

About this time also wall-paper was introduced from China. At first it came in small sheets, but later was manufactured in rolls. It was known as 'pagoda papers.' Soon both the French and English were making their own, but here again they relied upon the Chinese to furnish them with many of their designs.

Nor did the colonists in America escape a strong Chinese influence through their crockery and their wall-paper. This influence modified their designs to such an extent that a writer on the latter says, 'Whether the dweller in this far-off New England atmosphere was conscious of it or not, he was indebted to many ancient peoples for the way in which he intertwined his spray, or translated his flower and bird into a decorative whole.'

From the time that Columbus made his unsuccessful attempt to discover India and China to the present day, there has seemed to be some subtle but powerful link connecting America with the life of the Far East. American trade began with China in 1784, and in subsequent years, our clipper ships, and even our whalers, made the goods of China common in the households of our Atlantic coasts. Since the World War it is difficult to find a home anywhere in the country that has not one or more articles from China or decorated, at least, with designs reminiscent of the Chinese. While many of these are very inferior, some of them are of the highest artistic value.

With such a subtle penetration going on through the centuries, it is difficult to trace the full effect of Chinese designs upon our art forms in the West. We have adopted them without thinking of their origin. There have been, however, two periods when our fine arts reacted definitely to influences from the Far East, one in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the other beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century and extending to the present.

What effect Chinese art had on Greek, Roman, or Byzantine design we do not know. We do know, however, something of the influence of the Western nations upon that of China, and may infer that the Chinese had at least an equal effect upon Occidental art forms.

Nor have we yet traced the influence that the journeys of Marco Polo and other travelers to the Far East had on the European painters of their own and subsequent generations. Though here again it may be inferred that there was some, for we know, as has already

been mentioned, their effect upon Dante. There are a number of European scholars of note — among them painters — who profess to see in the rocks in the background of da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa,' a strong resemblance to the peculiar rocks so common in Chinese landscapes, especially during that period, and who believe that the unaccounted-for years in his life were not spent in Italy, as alleged by some scholars, but in the Near East, where he may have come in contact with examples of Chinese art. As the two groups are fairly evenly balanced, and neither can base their accounts of how he spent those years on any documentary evidence, the possibility of Chinese art having influenced him, must remain purely a conjecture, though one quite within the realm of possibility. Another European artist of the same century who used a similar type of rocks and mountains, and is even more reminiscent of the Chinese so far as method is concerned, was Günewald Mappe in his 'Temptation of Saint Anthony' above the Isenheim altar.

In both the two major periods — the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in our own day — when Western art felt the influence of Far Eastern art, the contact has given our art a fresh creative impetus.

The earlier of these periods was known as the Rococo. The first of the well-known painters to reflect the influence was Watteau. He not only broke away from the use of strong colors in his landscapes, but did not employ the late mediæval method of dividing the canvas up by architectural schemes. He treated his landscapes as a sort of background for his figures, making them nebulous and almost monochromic, fairy landscapes, in subdued color. There is a striking affinity between them and

some of the Chinese landscapes, though he never was able to subordinate his figures and make them a part of his design in the masterly way the Chinese artist did. A striking illustration is his 'Embarkation for the Island of Cythera' in the Louvre. His use, too, of monochrome backgrounds and his curious handling of clouds are suggestive of the Chinese.

His successors never seem to have lost entirely his sense of light and color.

Boucher and the later Fragonard in particular show traces of this Chinese influence.

While the artists of the period were divided in their attitude toward Chinese art, as are our painters to-day, they, like their brethren of the present, united in their admiration of the Chinese manner of depicting birds and flowers.

During this 'Age of Feeling,' as it was called sentimentally, a new medium of painting came into being, that of water-color. Adolf Reichwein says in his 'China and Europe; Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century': 'Water-color painting (as distinguished from tempera which had long been known and used) grew out of the need for a new rendering of landscape corresponding to the new feeling for Nature. Once more, no explanation is needed of the fact that the first landscape-painter to employ this medium was John Robert Cozen, an Englishman (died 1794). In their coloring the landscapes of this painter surprise us by their affinity to Chinese art. Cozens used brown and gray for ground tones with a touch of blue and red for lights. But he first put in the outlines with Chinese ink. Since he laid on ink, as he did all his other colors, with

the brush and not the pen, he developed a technique which even in detail corresponded to the Chinese methods of landscape painting. . . . Chinese ink was also used in the preliminary stages of miniature painting which likewise only attained its charming delicacy during the Rococo.'

While Cozens confined himself to landscapes, his successors used water-color for figures. Two painters who made a name for themselves in this new medium were Joshua Christall (died 1847) and Henry Liversedge, who died in 1832. Turner tried it but gave up the use of Chinese ink about 1800.

Just how much or how little Turner, a forerunner of the Impressionists, was influenced by his use of Chinese ink and the knowledge of Chinese art that must have accompanied it, it is difficult to say. Tone, at least, was one of his marked characteristics, and Constable in speaking of his work says, 'Tone is the most seductive and inviting quality a picture can have.' Certainly his paintings suggest the Chinese in their imaginative quality and the larger implications he gives to his subjects, as well as in their tone harmonies — though at no time did they cease to be English. In his early life he had painstakingly attempted to grasp the external aspects of Nature, but in his later works he left her far behind and painted 'landscapes conjured up by his own imagination.'

Gainsborough, that other great English landscapist of the period, too, consciously or unconsciously, reflected Chinese influence in his later work. Frank E. Washburn-Freund, in speaking of his 'A Landscape with a Bridge,' said to be his last work, says: 'It is an almost ethereal work, born of an art freed from all ma-

terial fetters. The art of Gainsborough, most genuine of England's Rococo painters, shows the spirit of the Rococo in the sphere of feeling; it floats, it vibrates with soft, tender, sensitive colors (silver blue in tone); it is an emanation. . . . It is strange to note that here where he is entirely himself, he unconsciously approaches in construction and special conception the greatest landscapes of all times and centuries, the work of the early Chinese. No more artificial "balance" with trees to the right of the foreground and ruins to the left; only the perpendicular on one side and then unending depth and space throughout the whole, rhythmically conceived picture.'

While the English Rococo period never lost its inherited English character, the chief characteristic here, as in all other countries, was a quickening of the spirit and a breaking of the chains of convention.

The second great impetus to an interest in Far Eastern art came in our own day when Perry opened the door of Japan in 1852. While Japanese art is not Chinese, it is the daughter of the Chinese, and many of her greatest artists were trained in China. The technique is almost identical. The use of perspective, line, and color is the same in both. As these were the points that interested the Impressionists, it may be said, without exaggeration, that in this far, at least, Chinese art continued to influence the art of the West. In order to avoid confusion, the term Far Eastern art will be used, instead of either Japanese or Chinese, as it is generic and comprehends both. (Japanese art can no more be disassociated in the main essentials from Chinese than American can from English.)

Our modern knowledge of Far Eastern art began, if we may credit the story, through some Japanese prints being used to wrap a parcel sent home from a shop in Paris.

The men, later known as the Impressionists, were just beginning to paint at this time; their first exhibition was held in 1874. While they owed a certain debt to Corot, Constable, and Turner, it is conceded by all critics that it was the art of the Far East that influenced them the most. Through it they awoke to a multitude of gradations of value, to the use of pure color in flat masses, and began to evolve a system of simpler line. Perhaps its greatest effect was in their changed approach to Nature. The men who reacted to this influence were Monet, Ingres, Manet, Guys, Whistler, Degas, Redon, Lautrec, and even Cézanne and Renoir in their earlier work. Like the Far Eastern artist, the Impressionists sought to express the luminous and the colorful. Like him, too, they strove to present the 'play of the features of the face of the earth, and the reflections of space in its eyes, which are the river and the sea.'

The extent to which any artist is moulded by a specific influence is known only to himself, and possibly to the critic who has made a study of his work. The English critic, Willard Huntington Wright, in his 'Modern Painting' says that Monet, whose avowed purpose it was to present the dynamics of the mood-producing phase of Nature, owes even more to the Japanese than he does to his European inheritance from Pissaro and Turner. 'They influenced his style and his selection of subjects. From them he lifted the idea of painting a single object many times in its varied atmospheric mani-

festations. But when the Japanese shifted their vantage ground with each successive picture, Monet's observation point remained stationary. His composition, too, superficial as it is, is frankly Japanese. It is generally represented by a straight line which runs near the lower frame from one side to the other of the canvas, and which supports the principal objects of the work. This line slants, now up to the left, now up to the right, but seldom is it curved as in the more advanced drawings of Hiroshige or Hokusai. His kinship to the Japanese is, after all, a natural one, for the temperaments of the Japanese and the French are as similar as possible between the East and the West. The Japanese artists presented atmospheric conditions by means of graduating large color planes into white or dark. Consequent effects of rain, snow, wind and sun are as vivid as Monet's.'

Edouard Manet rejected the conventional chiaroscuro of his time, and let his lights sift and dispel themselves evenly on the whole of his groupings. He used also rhythm of details and broad planes — again reflecting the influence of Far Eastern art.

A direct connection can easily be traced by those familiar with Far Eastern art and its tenets, not only with the work of the Impressionists, but that of the many so-called 'Modernists.' We find Cézanne saying that painting from Nature does not imply copying the object but the realizing of one's sensations; a statement that bears an astonishing likeness, though a very individualistic version, of the more universal desire of the old Chinese artist to express the essential essence of the object, its inner reality through outward form as Ching Ho defines it. The Chinese definition carries the desire to a

higher emotional plane, for the artist is not concerned so much with the emotion the object arouses in himself as he is with the emotion he desires to arouse in the spectator; he makes of the onlooker a collaborator. To do this he must transcend the personal and enter into the universal.

Again we have Matisse, who derived much from the Impressionists, in his more decisive paintings doing work very like Chinese porcelains in quality. We have Van Gogh using his strokes of color as strokes of drawing, expressing the two simultaneously — a use that recalls the Chinese method of brush work. Gauguin flattened out his forms, designed in two dimensions and painted without chiaroscuro in pure colors — a conscious or unconscious feeling out toward the effects the Chinese achieved by their masterly use of the same means.

Writing of the very modern men, Clive Bell, the much quoted English critic, says of Bonnard, ‘There is something Chinese about him. . . . The design of a picture by Bonnard, like that of many Chinese pictures and Persian textiles, seems to have been laid on the canvas as one might lay cautiously on the grass some infinitely precious figured gauze.’

In fact it might be said that each of the recent art movements, Cubism with its attempt to express emotion, Post-impressionism, Futurism, Vorticism, Synchronism, Expressionism, and the other rapidly succeeding cults are attempts to free Occidental art from the rigid conventions that the Renaissance fostered upon it, giving to it a literalness now made unnecessary by photography, and to substitute an emotional range such as is enjoyed by the art of the Far East. While

much of this feeling out for a fuller means of expression has been blind and instinctive, yet it cannot be denied that the dissatisfaction was fertilized by a knowledge of what this art of the Chinese and Japanese had accomplished. Or, as Walter Pach conceded, in writing of the new art movements, 'Doubtless the appreciation of Oriental Art in the nineteenth century hastened us in becoming conscious of our problems'; and he might have added shortcomings.

Of the American artists other than Whistler, perhaps Harrison, Childe Hassam, La Farge, and Arthur Davies reflect most strongly the broadening effect that Far Eastern art has had on the technique of the West.

In the minor arts, etching and illustrating, together with advertising, have been the ones to show most directly the influence of Far Eastern art, probably owing to the mediums they employ. Interior decoration, the theater art, and fashion, which is moulding itself on the simple costume lines of the Far East, are not far behind.

The man who has most successfully fused the art ideals of the East and the West, in painting, according to Elie Faure, is André Derain, with his intense simplification and his 'fusion of the tragic sense of space of the Chinese, the attentive lyricism of Lorenzetti, the Sienese, the imagination of Rousseau, the customs official, and the geographical density which characterizes Corot.'

The full effect of Chinese painting on the art of the Occident has yet to be felt, for it is only in the last decade or so that the really great art of China has come to the West. Even now it is just beginning to be known beyond the comparatively small group which was fortunate enough to own examples. (Our great museums

have assembled collections that rival the best that Europe has to offer.) It is only a question of time before our artists in general awaken to its beauty, as did the men of the Rococo period and the Impressionists (though neither had work of the first rank such as is now available to stimulate them).

The great art of China has much to reveal to us of the use of great masses, of pure profile, not to mention its ability to interpret the inner meaning of things, their essence, while losing none of its plasticity and art value.

The measure of any new art — and Chinese art is new to us — is the extent to which it changes our vision. Already as Elie Faure points out, ‘The forms of sensibility expressed by the art of the Far East have entered so deep into the reason of the Occident that to-day they determine one of the most splendid aspects of its regenerated symbolism.’

With this true of the present, it is impossible to prophesy how far-reaching its future contribution will be.

THE END

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

WHILE the following list of books makes no attempt to be exhaustive, it is fairly comprehensive, and has been freely consulted and quoted from in the preparation of this book. Much of the most valuable material upon the subject, however, is still uncollected in magazine articles and random pamphlets. Owing to the great numbers of these, it is possible to suggest only a few of those which contain frequent articles of interest to the student of Chinese art.

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## COLLECTIONS OF CHINESE ART

THERE is nowhere, with the exception of China herself, and possibly Japan, concentrated more important collections of Chinese art than in the public and private collections of America.

The outstanding museum collections are to be found in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art of New York, the Freer Gallery of Art of Washington, the University Museum of Philadelphia, the Field's Museum of Natural History of Chicago, the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology of Toronto, Canada, and the William Hayes Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge. The Detroit Museum of Art, the Chicago Art Institute, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Museum of Philadelphia, and many others are beginning to acquire collections of note.

The number of outstanding private collectors is increasing rapidly.

Since the Chinese painting deteriorates so fast from light, heat, and dust, the majority of the museums show only a small number of their paintings in their galleries, and change them frequently. The ones, however, not on exhibition can be seen at any time on request.



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